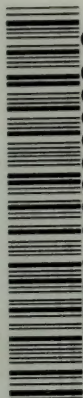


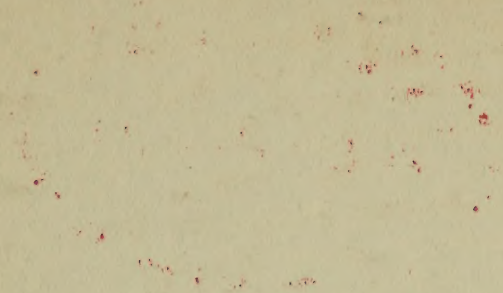
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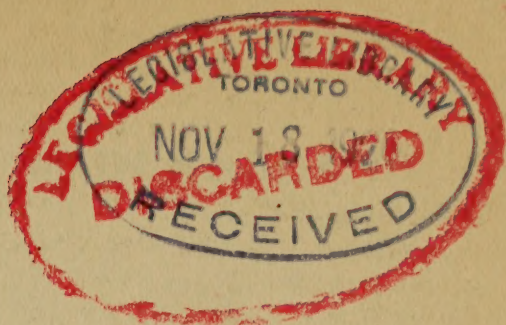


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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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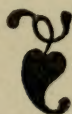
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OH! TO BE IN ENGLAND

A BOOK OF THE OPEN AIR

BY

S. P. B. MAIS ✱



80363

"This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England"

Shakespeare

"Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given"

Rupert Brooke

LONDON

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TO
MY WIFE

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the editors of *The Daily Express*, *The Sunday Express*, *The Journal of Education*, *The Evening News*, *The Field*, *The Sunday Times*, *The School Guardian*, *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *The Yorkshire Observer*, *The Daily Dispatch*, and *The Bystander* for allowing me to reproduce many of the following essays.

PREFACE

*The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite ; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thoughts supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.*

THIS book is a debt that I owe, a long-standing debt, to England, which to me is not the Fleet Street where I work, but the country-side to which I belong.

When others played golf and cricket I have been away over the hills, walking. I have precious memories of games, but they are neither so rich nor so lasting as those which I associate with great walks. There was the night I escaped from London after seeing *Tristram and Iseult* and woke up to find myself in Tintagel ; the day I left home in a raging temper to recover my serenity on the Penistone Ridge ; there were those wonderful Sundays when, as an undergraduate, I answered the call of the Icknield Way and the valleys of the Windrush and Evenlode ; there was the day I was left for dead on the top of the Brecon Beacons, days of bathing in icy mountain tarns, days of beagling on Salisbury Plain and the Lincolnshire Fens, days of fox-hunting in Dorset and Leicestershire, days of stag-hunting on Exmoor, the day I climbed Ben

Lawers and was mistaken for a hunter after gentian, the day I got lost in the snow on Cader Idris, days of rain on Helvellyn, the day I discovered Ightham, Haddon Hall, Compton Wynyates, Burford Priory, Mile House of Nuidhe and that proud little manor near Hurstmonceaux where William the Conqueror planted his standard, days of searching for cromlechs and tumuli on the tors of Dartmoor and the bleak moors of Cornwall, sunny days on the Sussex Downs, hurricane days in the stonewall country above Monyash, days at the Stay-a-Little Inn near Plinlimmon, the Ship Inn at Porlock, the Peacock at Rowsley, the Star Inn at Alfriston, days, the best days of all, impossible to write about, so fragrant and so elusive is the memory of them.

I have done scant justice to my best days in this book, but in weeding out these fugitive papers from the scrap-heap of my occasional writings of the last ten years, I am told that I may perhaps set other men wandering to discover England, the England who refuses to disclose her naked beauty in its full glory to any but the devout worshipper on foot.

Furiously do the motor chars-à-banc charge along our lanes, vainly do hordes of motorists penetrate to the remotest slopes. The best is hidden from these. The best is hidden from all except the few who follow in the footsteps of George Borrow, Richard Cobbett, Edward Thomas, W. H. Davies, W. H. Hudson, Gilbert White, Richard Jefferies, William Hazlitt, the youthful Belloc and their like.

These "unlicked, incondite" trifles of mine need some excuse. They represent, I have said it, a millionth part of that debt that I owe to England. If I could polish them up I would, but the varying moods they

represent would then vanish into the one mood that I happen to be in at this moment, which is one of regret—regret that I omitted to write at the time about my best walks, regret that my walking days are over. No more for me the joy of thirty-five good miles covered between sunrise and sundown; no more for me the joy that comes with the tankard of ale in the inn at night-fall after a day in the sun and the wind. I can now wander only in the spirit. I can still lift up my eyes to the hill country of the South Downs as I journey homeward every night from work: I can still marvel at the ever-changing colour, line and form of those balm-bringing ridges, but the peace that descends on the frequenters of the hill country, a peace that passes the understanding of those who are not solitary wayfarers, can never be mine again, unless it be vicariously. If any of these descriptions rouse a single reader to explore for himself an unknown plot of rural England where he finds this peace I shall be happy. The initial effort to do a strange thing is tremendous. The herd instinct, too, is very strong, but it is so much worth while to escape that I long sometimes to cry out in the streets, I long to start a new religion . . . “This England of yours, have you seen it? Leave your books and your games, your work and your worries, escape by yourself to the lonely places and there you shall find unutterable joy and profound peace.”

No joy is real unless you want to share it with the world: that is why all the world loves a lover. I love reading the more because I can make others love books too. I love the country-side infinitely more if I think that I can make others share my love for her.

But there is one thing very firmly to be remembered.

All this talk about England does not make me blind to the joy of foreign travel. To walk on English moors does not promote insularity. It makes my soul yearn to wander through Andalusia with George Borrow, to visit Old Calabria with Norman Douglas, to eat the lotus in Tiare Tahiti with Mamua and Rupert Brooke, to take the path to Rome with Belloc, to travel on a donkey in the Cevennes with Stevenson, to ride on mules across the Andes with Cunninghame Graham searching for the silver mines of the Incas of Peru, to call on Compton Mackenzie in Capri, to stand in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs, and on the shore at Marathon with Byron, to lose myself in Arabia Deserta with Doughty, and to hide myself among the Green Mansions of W. H. Hudson's forest in the tropics; I want to join Flecker in his Golden Journey to Samarkand, and Marco Polo in his quest of Kubla Khan; I want to answer the call of Hakluyt and the beat of Drake's Drum.

“ I cannot rest from travel.
For ever roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known.
. . . My purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset and the baths
Of all the Western Stars until I die.”

I am like Conrad in quest of his youth. “ When I grow up I shall go *there*.” But at what age does one grow up? Money plays so large a part in these things.

In the meanwhile there is no point in refusing to accompany Hazlitt and Cobbett, who got no farther than Llangollen and Petersfield in the flesh, but were none the less true travellers for that. I have stood

under the shadow of the Jungfrau and longed for the hop-fields of Kent. So this book has two purposes : to appease that nostalgia for home which seizes all you lucky travellers in the Orient, and to guide those about to try their 'prentice hand on their own country.

If I live I hope to tell you of the joys of Aleppo, Tripolis, Babylon and Balsara. In the meanwhile the kingdom of England and the glory thereof have soaked my heart through. To misquote Elizabeth's Lord High Admiral : "God send that I may see as goodly and fair a sight again, when need is." Of few things am I more glad than that I took Master Thomas Fuller's advice : "Know most of the rooms of thy native country before thou goest over the threshold thereof ; especially, seeing England presents thee with so many observables. But late writers lack nothing but age, and home wonders but distance, to make them admired."

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I

ROADS

MY first impression of a road was of that which runs from High Bray to Barnstaple. Our house lay in a combe backed by a huge rookery, which made the white-washed farm look trebly clean and fresh by contrast. Leading up to the main road was a typical Devonshire lane, the hedges reaching to some fifteen feet above the surface of the road, the steep, thick banks deeply interesting, but it was the road winding over the top of the hill that fascinated me most. It led directly to the two summits of my ambition—to Exmoor if I took the left-hand route, to the sea if I took the right. From the turning itself—a most picturesque spot, where stood a weather-beaten white cottage, flanked by more weather-beaten fir-trees, called Stone Cross—it was possible on a clear day to see away out to sea as far as Lundy Island and Hartland Point on the west, Yes Tor and the peaks of Dartmoor to the south, and the long, bare, rolling downs of Exmoor on the north and east. Strange would it have been indeed if I had not succumbed to the mysterious charm that this, my first and best of roads, held out to me. My favourite resting-place was a huge deserted oak, into the branches of which I would climb, and then gaze out away towards the sea, rapt at the panorama that lay stretched out before me, all Barnstaple Bay and the high cliffs of Clovelly, the long, straight Point of Hartland

and the rugged backbone of Lundy. Up to the age of twelve this road fed me and educated me ; to it I came when under the stress of any emotion and imparted all my sorrows and joys, thereby, as Bacon said, halving the one and doubling the other. Its only rival in my affections was the meadow stream that led down to the old deserted mill at Beccott, and I did not believe either of them to be capable of so frail a vice as jealousy ; the one I looked on rather as a father, the other, the more talkative, as a mother, each essential to my happiness.

Six years of Public School life made me forget roads. There were not many that were "in bounds," so they became synonymous with craft and guile ; paths that required the eagle eye and circumspection in the treading, accompanied by flutterings of the heart and oftentimes unnecessary panic. Indeed it was not until I got to Oxford that I again realised the beauty of roads. To omit the High Street and the immediate vicinity, which derives its beauty rather from the buildings merging into the road than in the roads themselves, I recollect with greatest pleasure the walks we took on those never-to-be-forgotten Sundays when we explored the whole country-side, sometimes by river (the meadow stream grown older along with us), more often by road. It was at this time that I discovered the Fosse Way at Tredington while I was exploring the Cotswolds and Shakespeare's country. What is it that so captivates us about the straightness of the Roman roads either on the map or actually while on the Way itself ? Normally, we prefer the winding, undulating, tree-bestrewn ways that disclose beauties of a sudden, like the road from Banbury to Broughton and Compton Wynyates. Straight roads are generally monotonous and tiring to

the walker, however dear to the heart of the motorist, who can "let her out" on such occasion to his heart's content, but there is a subtle magic in all these roads made to the rule, that force their way victorious over every obstacle, that deviate for no defile or crag, but push on rigidly, almost cruelly, correct. To a certain extent, of course, historic association plays a part in our love for the Fosse Way and Watling Street. We unconsciously find ourselves imbued with the spirit of the past, marching along with the rhythm of the tramping Roman legions ringing in our ears.

In the vacation time I used to explore the recognised beauty spots of Great Britain, and of all these the roads in Derbyshire stand out most clearly in my memory. These eye-destroying, white, glaring roads of dusty limestone, in what Defoe called the most uncivilised part of England, are still reminiscent of days when crags and gaunt stone walls formed the only view for the wayfarer. I remember reading somewhere that roads, the natural means of travel for all Englishmen before the invention of the engine, were deserted and at peace for some fifty years, roughly, between 1850 and 1900, but that now the incursion of the motor car and cycle has changed all that, and they are as much frequented as they were in the eighteenth century. It seems to me that these Peak District roads have never been anything but silent. Before trains came into general use this middle part of England was rarely exploited by the traveller, rare though its beauties are. Nowadays cars and bicycles endeavour to skirt it because it has earned, quite justly, an unenviable notoriety as the worst-kept part of the British Isles. Only the pedestrian pursues the even tenor of his way undisturbed by any

thought of the ill-mended, bumpy routes. So long as he can enjoy the air and scenery, little else disturbs his equanimity.

Surely the traveller, when he finds himself allowed only a few all too short glimpses of steep chasms and winding rivers, of majestic cliffs and wooded dells, as he plunges madly into tunnel after tunnel on the Midland Railway between Chinley and Matlock, envies the leisurely wayfarer who is at liberty to explore from the great main road from Derby to Manchester these magnificent sights from a proper perspective. Miller's Dale, Youlgreve, Dovedale, Haddon Hall, Chatsworth, Bakewell, Castleton, Eyam and Wingfield Manor House are all missed by the railway and are all beauty spots that are hard to equal in any other part of England.

I know of one family in this same Peak District who depend for their amusement, society and contact with the outer world upon the road which runs on the other side of the valley from their lawn. When a stray motor or carriage is descried toiling up the steep hill the whole household is called out to bring field-glasses and watch operations until the stranger has passed from view. Even the quarry carts and the traction engines, the railway drays and hay wagons enliven the prospect in this silent village, and we find ourselves calculating how long it will be before the milk-cart will reappear on the horizon, carrying our parcels from the station.

For four years I lived on a road in Lancashire between Fleetwood and Blackpool. It is hardly to be believed how much that bare white track seemed to rot away and die after the summer visitors left it until the following spring. Black with people in motors, charrs-à-banc, bicycles or on foot on Good Friday and bank

holidays, it remained a desert for two-thirds of the year, frequented only by sea-gulls and occasional runners from the school by the sea, dreary, hateful, monotonously ugly. Only late on Saturday nights did it re-echo with the sounds of revellers returning home. This road cannot be related in any sort of way to the roads we choose in holiday time—the Minehead-Ilfracombe road, for instance. I doubt whether a more romantic road than this exists.

Tired with the travail of a term, we search for rest in nature and leave the smoky, crowded north country, and after penetrating more and more exquisite scenery in the Quantocks as the train gets slower and slower, we at last disembark at Minehead, put our rucksacks on our back and start for fairyland. The road out of Minehead is like any other south-country road, but when we have advanced about two miles, as we get into our swing, the mystery of it begins to enter our souls, and we find ourselves chanting snatches of forgotten songs of long ago, capering from side to side of the road to catch a glimpse of hidden beauties of wood and field and sea and earth and sky. It has a quiet beginning, this royal entry into the real west country; its galaxy of gems is not displayed to us until we have penetrated miles into the heart of it, and for that, among many other advantages, are we grateful, for we want the mood to grow on us nearly imperceptibly, not to be jerked into a sudden gasp of admiration at once. Porlock, not Minehead, is the real gate of the west.

From our inn we watch the Lynton coach proudly draw up and compel its male passengers, nearly all Americans and Germans, to walk up the famous Porlock Hill. We decide to join them, and, panting, perspiring,

we essay the dire climb, listening the while to subdued "Achs!" from the stouter Teutons and many comparisons on the part of the hustling Americans; but the summit is worth the climb. From Hawkcombe Head (where there may be a meet of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, if we are lucky) an immense vista spreads out before us. West and south lies Exmoor, all purple and gold; to the north a steep, densely wooded declivity stretches right down to the sea at Porlock Weir; eastward lies the green plain of Porlock, and farther off Hunstone Point and the Quantocks and the curved coast-line of Wales and Somerset, gradually encroaching more and more upon the sea. This road, of all roads, is the most romantic, for on it you will meet all the friends you least expected to see, all more friendly even than before, having cast to the winds the conventions that hedged them in. You will see pink-coated huntsmen galloping after their hounds, chasing the graceful, fleeting stag over ravine and cleave, brook and beacon; animals and birds will cross your path at every turn, hunting and hunted, and mingled with it all you will see an ever-changing, glorious combination of colours that will make this road one of the sweetest memories to look back on of your whole life. You will do well if you can spare the time to pursue this road right round the Devon and Cornwall coast. By the time you reach Plymouth you will have experienced adventures not a few, and return the richer in body, mind and spirit for your tour. There is a tonic quality in these roads not to be found elsewhere.

The great main London roads, such as the Exeter to London or Bath to London roads, may have a more perfect surface and repay the motorist better, but for

the highest possible pleasure that the pedestrian can derive there are no roads to compete with this. Salisbury Plain has too much of a sameness to be long enjoyed except by the swift passenger, the Bath road is too full of cars and bicycles, but the undulating roads of Devon do not provide ideal going for the tourist unless he goes on foot, so on foot the wise man will go.

I have of late come to live in one of these great main roads, and its life and bustle is very dear to me, but not to walk on. In the early morning the road and I are awakened by the mail van, the twittering of the birds, the crowing of cocks and the steady tramp of the farm labourers going to work. About eight o'clock we are fully roused and equipped for the day. From then on till dusk we each go on our individual way, I to work, the road to submit to multitudinous passage of cars and carts, bicycles and engines, each raising more dust as a sort of silent protest against its overdue exertion—a species of perspiration. Grave and gay, bearers of good news and foul, tread unthinking, carelessly, on its white breast until eventide, when the workmen return, the birds become silent, and even the sun and wind desert it.

II

MATLOCK HILL

I FIRST climbed that long white limestone road which leads out of the Derwent Valley on to the Tansley heights when I was five years old. My father had just been inducted to his first living there : before that we had lived among the Brecon Beacons in Radnorshire, so I was used to mountains. I should have been lost without them. All I can remember of that first day in the new, grey, cold country of Derbyshire was that the peasant folk who crowded to greet us were weirdly repellent, uncouth, grey and dour, like their own skies and stone walls. Had I then read any of the works of the Brontë sisters I should have noticed the strange resemblance to the country folk who came within the ken of those who lived in that other parsonage of Haworth, on the Penistone Ridge. I felt curiously lost, strange, outcast ; a feeling came over me of which I have never since been able to rid myself, although the Peak District has been my home now for twenty-five years. I remember that I ate damson jam on that first day, and that there was a swing in the garden. Beyond that I think my imagination plays tricks with me. Nothing else stands out clear ; all is one blurred impression of discomfort.

It must have been years after that I stood on the high, broad parapet of the Rectory garden wall and imagined vast hordes of marauding enemies, fresh from

the conquest of Matlock Town, every building of which they had razed to the ground (I can still visualise the smoke blotting out the landscape), marching carelessly in fours up the steep white road, the full command of which lay before me. I had at my feet concrete floors, on which were mounted mighty cannon. I saw myself rushing to the church tower to ring the alarm, returning to fire my cannon right in the middle of the astonished, unprepared foe. I saw myself leading a mighty charge, driving the alien helter-skelter down the steep hill back on to the charred ruins of what had once been Matlock. I saw myself, later, decorated by the Queen for my valour—the hero of my neighbourhood, the saviour of my shire. Dreams! Dreams!

The nearest I ever got to the result of my castles in the air was when my father, through illness, had to go away for a whole year, and, on our return, the horses were taken from the shafts, and we were drawn by stalwart parishioners through a much-bedecked and garlanded village in a triumphal procession. On that day, too, there was damson jam for tea. By far my most obstinate memories of that long hill, however, are those which recall those morning walks with my mother, when I accompanied her on her shopping expeditions. I would always be late in starting, so that I had to run for half-a-mile at break-neck speed to overtake her, only to catch a severe cold by then having to crawl along at a snail's pace. Somehow small boys hate walking by the side of their relatives; there is something ineffably tedious and upsetting to their dignity in such a tame method of procedure.

About half-way down the hill we would be caught up by my father, who invariably (sensible man) bicycled.

My mother as invariably met him with: "Oh dear, dear, I am so glad you have caught us at last. I've had visions of skids and broken limbs ever since I started. Why didn't you come sooner?" He would mumble something about having to see the school-master or the verger, which we both knew to be moonshine. It was the study fire and a fascinating book that had delayed him.

An hour later you could see us panting up the hill again, all overladen with parcels, the bicycle converted for the nonce into a local Carter Paterson's van, I with a precious copy of *Chips* or *The Boy's Own Paper* to console me for my packages.

Anon we would rest on the wall "to let," in my mother's words, "that horrible, creaking quarry cart go past. I hate these carters' faces; we never see a human being."

The day came when I possessed a bicycle of my own. How I used to love that steep descent then! Two miles to the station and I could do it in under five minutes. Oh, the *facilis descensus* . . . the *revocare gradum*! Heart-rending tales were poured into my ears of vain men who rode up steep hills, only to die of exhaustion at the top. How many times have I thought—my heart thumping against my ribs, as, in spite of warnings, I stuck to my machine—that I should die when I reached the summit! Somehow all my life through I have never learned not to hurry; I always seem to be rushing either up or down hills. I owe more of my character to that steep descent than I know. How many stories have I not fashioned as I pounded along alone in the slush and fog of a January day! How many articles and verses owe their inception to thoughts

that have voluntarily moved me to most inharmonious numbers as I climbed that self-same road !

One most tangible quality I most certainly owe to it. I should never have had the good fortune to succeed in athletics if I had not trained my legs assiduously upon that stern disciplinarian path. It gave me wind and stamina, stout legs and an enduring heart ; but it gave more, much more, than this. On wintry afternoons, when the darkness was just closing in, I would stand at the nursery window and gaze out over the fields on to the narrowing white strip of road and watch excitedly the lamplighter light up first one strip and then another of my favourite path, and I would scan it far and wide for any hint of a visitor or caller who would while away the tedium of the day. At tea-time I would creep into the drawing-room and see my mother gazing rapt too. "I wonder when your father'll be back. Oh ! that must be he. No, not there. There !" she would say excitedly, pointing at the lamplighter or a solitary quarryman going slowly homeward. "He must be in soon ; he promised to be back by four. I'm sure I can see him now. Yes, that's his hat." And all the time my father would be in the room, silently shaking with laughter, finger on lip, lest I should spoil the fun. "Why, here you are all the time, and I was positive that was you over by the mill. Come and look. Never mind ; let's have tea."

At times it would be a wedding or a funeral that was due at two o'clock, when my father liked to be asleep. Then I would be posted at my window to watch for the glad or sorry cortège, and go down to warn him when it approached the church. On one great occasion in the year, the first Sunday in August, all the local Oddfellows

and Druids would hold a mighty mass meeting and march with gaudy banners and martial music along this historic road up to the village green, where my father would preach to them. I never was so proud of him as then ! He seemed to be the Druid of Cowper's *Boadicea*.

Then there came the days of the first motors. How we would fly to the windows and wonder whose they were, where they were going, what chance there was of ever having a ride in one ! To-day we should not put down the book we were reading for a Zeppelin or aeroplane ! Sometimes at night I would be awakened by the raucous cries or ribald songs or Methodist melodies of a football or cricket team driving home over the moors from a match, and, in imagination, I saw myself being bowled along an endless white road in a wagonette like theirs, crunching over the stones, swaying over the stones, singing my favourite songs on my way to El Dorado, Buxton, Timbuctoo or Kynance Cove. Did I dream it, or is it true, that in early years our more godless villagers put wires across the hill at nights in order to spoil the passing cyclists of the eighteen-nineties ? I know that they put ropes across about half-way down in order to take toll of all wedding parties on their way to the station. Our villagers had much of the *apache* about them.

There have been sad scenes on and about this strange, white, restless road. More than one poor girl in my short lifetime has crawled up in the dead of night out of the town, up this dreary, unsympathetic hill to our lonely moorland, and, unable to find solace in her misery, sought peace in the deep waters of our mill-dam. There is a dark part of the hill where it enters the pine-

trees that clothe the banks of the Tansley brook, which is said to be haunted to this day by the ghost of a young girl who threw herself over the bridge on a frosty night some fifty years ago because her lover had been drowned while skating on the dam just above. It is a road of moods, is this Matlock Hill. Open to all the violence of the west wind, you feel the pitiless forces of nature at their worst as you grope your way in the inky blackness of a stormy November night down to the town, where lights and shops and music and masses of ever-moving human beings seem to take you into another world than that in which a moment ago you were battling single-handed with the blast.

Your mission done, you once more take the lonely road, and it is as if all the furies of the inferno were let loose to torment your miserable soul. For an æon, an æon of three-quarters of an hour, beset by every ghostly fear, you run stumbling through the blackness, like Tam o' Shanter with witches and warlocks at your heels, imagining each bush to be a bear, and, after a fight that seems to last to all eternity, you see at last, in the far distance, the one beacon light in the drawing-room window, and you win the top of the drive. Down it you rush as fast as your legs can carry you, only to be met at the doorstep with "Oh, what a time you have taken! I thought you'd got lost or tumbled over the bridge or fallen into the dam. Come along in and get warm."

On hot days in August the white limestone seems to destroy every nerve in your eyes; you are blinded by the glare, and long for the sweet green meadows of Dorset or Devon. The passing cars cover you with fine white dust that gets into every crevice of your skin and

chokes you if you open your mouth ; the sun beats down upon your back and the hill seems never-ending. You count your steps between lamp-post and lamp-post ; you wish you had brought your bicycle, that you had left it at home, that you had never started, that you had not stopped to rest on the wall, that you had taken it easier, that you had rushed it. At last, panting and sweating, you fall rather than walk into the shadow of the drive, and all is forgotten in the ecstasy of being at home. But its moods are not all evil moods, though we are nervous of its moods at nine and twelve, at two and four, when the school children get in the way of the bicycle ; at dawn and sunset, when the mill hands go to and return from work, and alternately please you with their winsome smiles and make you feel a fool with their well-meant but pungent chaff. Yet there are times when all the poetry of the world is in this road. When we have walked home on a still, moon-lit, frosty night after a dance, where our Amaryllis or Neæra has smiled on us, we seem to be treading on air, and the road becomes a lover too. We can tell it all our secrets, full sure that it will never betray us ; we can live over again those all too short honeyed hours, or it may be that the ecstasy is still more perfect. We may even be escorting our inamorata home down this self-same road. Then “ what matter the weather, so we be together ? ” Only too swiftly then do the mile-stones and the hours pass. Whether it was wet or fine, beclouded or moon-lit, we forget. Henceforth for us it is a *via sacra*.

Then there are the comings and goings—the joyous home-comings, when we are met at the station, after a year’s absence, and all the old familiar faces beam to

see us once again. We roll over the cobble-stones in the same old carriage which we thought must have fallen to pieces, like the Deacon's shay. Each stone, each tree, each turn in the road, each yard of the hill brings back a fresh memory, revives some hidden longing which we had thought long since dead. At last the Rectory windows appear over the horizon, and waving handkerchiefs urge on our Pegasus, coeval with the carriage, to one supreme effort. The villagers pass, bob, smirk, wave ; we are at home again. In the days that follow we renew our associations with the dear road. Somehow it does not seem able to appreciate our uniform. " I could do with the new-fangled, devil engines, and I don't mind them flying things, for they don't concern me; but these last eighteen months 'as bin diff'rent, some'ow. I don't 'ear so much laughter like. All t' faces as I see is drawn and 'arf-starved lookin' [my road always talks to me in a Derbyshire accent: I don't know why, but it does]; all t' lasses are greetin' and all t' laads are gone. Summat's up, I can see, and I tell yer straight, I don't like it. Never no kissin' and 'uggin' nor nowt o' that ; all marchin' in them 'ideous dust-coloured clothes (not my idea of dust-coloured, mind yer ; I'm a clean man mysen), and 'ere are you, followin' t' fashion, struttin' along bolt-upright—not like yer used ter do, sort o' 'arf listenin' for t' pixies and warlocks. Ye're stuck up, lad, that's wot's wrong wi' yer, and yer look sort o' older and careworn. Ye're onny a nipper for all yer goin' bald. Yer can't deceive me; yer look fit to greet yersen for all yer fine clothes. Come on, lad, what is it ? What is it ? "

In trembling, faltering accents I tell my road what has befallen us through no fault of our own : somehow,

having told him, a heavy burden falls off the back ; I feel more than ever like Christian, his Hill of Difficulty overcome.

“ Look’ee, my lad, I owes you summat for tellin’ me that. Dost na know what I’ve done for thee all thy life long ? Sithee then : this ’ere’s wot you’re doin’ for me like. I’ve made you and watched you all th’ time sin’ you were a wee lad, and now my life’s in danger : you’d defend yer feyther and moother, wouldn’t yer ? Well, A’m yer feyther and moother and yer feyther’s feyther and moother likewise. All the foochure ’appiness o’ Hengland depends on th’ like o’ you. Eh, lad, but I’m proud o’ you : be proud o’ me :

‘ Proud, then, clear-eyed and laffin’, go to
Greet Death as a friend.’

(Eh ! I can read potry too !) Wherever you may go, lad, you’ll take me with you like, and maybe if ye die, over yer body another road’ll take its birth from your dust, and that road, fer all that it’s furrin, will contain th’ sperrit o’ me. Chew on that sonny ; it’s true, true as I’m ’ere.”

So this is what patriotism means : if only our newspapers would leave us alone and not bully us so much we might begin to understand if nature would but speak. The days fly ; again we stand at the drawing-room window and gaze over our mother’s shoulder out on to the road and wonder if that car brings a caller, if that obvious chimney-sweep is father returning from the archdeacon’s meeting, if it would be too cold for a walk, whether we had better not wait for to-morrow, because it will probably be warmer (or colder). Again we wander side by side, sauntering Matlockwards to

shop . . . and, just as she did twenty years ago, my mother will turn to look every five yards to see if my father's bicycle is in sight yet—"He must have had a skid." Of course, he turns up, late as ever, and merrily we proceed. Just as heavily laden as in the old days we return an hour later, the bicycle more like Carter Paterson's van than ever.

All too soon leave is up ; the carriage is at the door ; the last farewells are said. We crawl up the drive : all down the hill until only the top of the Rectory is visible we wave in response to the flapping of napkins and handkerchiefs that seem to crowd every window. We are left to our own thoughts . . . when the road for the last time obtrudes itself upon our vision : we can almost see its face and hear its voice. And in the end it is the road we remember, not the people.

III

DORSET DEAR

IN the dark days from November to February we are usually entirely discontented with our lot. "London," we say repeatedly over the teacups, "London is the only place in winter. Oh, to be in London now December's here!" The splendid colours of autumn fade into the drab nakedness of Christmas; there is no beauty in Nature that we should desire her; there is no magic call in the air which makes us climb West Hill or High Stoy and drink in afresh the myriad variable features that have made our county world-famous. If the Pipes of Pan play at all, they play but one tune: "London—London—London."

When we go for a walk it is to the station to see the expresses dash through, Waterloowards: only after a heavy run across country with the beagles does any of the old love of the soil return to us; we become irritable, morose. Why should the Londoner have all the privileges of life? Why should all those laughter-rousing revues with their narcotic powers of taking men's minds off the horrors of life be all at the beck and call of the people of one town? Why should not N—— K——, L—— H——, E—— L——, M—— G—— and the rest of them make glad our hearts too by travelling up and down the country, bringing joy and light into remote places? Surely they could be spared for a month out of the twelve.

Why will not Messrs Lyons supply us county folk of Dorset with delicate viands and a band to play the while, instead of confining their good work to one town? Why will not famous men in the world of art and letters, men whose very initials stir a feeling of profound reverence in us—say G. B. S. or E. V. L. or A. A. M.—leave Adelphi Terrace and the haunts of Fleet Street and come and commune with us in the heart of that country which they profess to love so dearly? I suppose the truth of the matter is that in winter-time at least man is a sociable animal; he wants companions, gaiety, warmth and a sense of speed. None of these will he find in Dorset. A bicycle is almost indecorous here, unless it is being wheeled uphill. To walk at a rate of more than three miles an hour is to cause vague uneasiness in the hearts of the people you pass, who either, tongue-tied, turn to stare at you long after you are out of sight, or jeer at you as a fanatic.

The sense of hurry is so far remote from us that on these rare occasions when we do go to London we have to stand still on the platform at Waterloo for some minutes to recover our sense of motion, so dazed are we by the rapidity with which people move and by the (to us) uncanny alertness of expression on their faces.

Here we take a library book (if we are wise) into the post office: there is always time to light a pipe and read another chapter before the lady-in-waiting can condescend to recognise our existence. As a matter of fact, I have learned at last that the only way in which you can get served in any shop in Sherton Abbas is to open a book and settle down to read. This quite

normal proceeding for some strange reason upsets their sense of equilibrium and proportion ; they are often eager to attend to your wants (from sheer perversity one is almost tempted to say) before you have had time to read even one page.

At any rate it is never safe to go shopping without some kind of literature under your arm. As a matter of fact, shopping here has its compensations. When it is raining (in the absence of a British Museum, Queen's Hall, National Gallery or Tube station) we just stroll into our local bookseller's, pick up some book on the counter (it may be Lenten prayers or a hand-book to geology) and settle down for a quiet hour's reading. No one will interrupt. As a change from this free refreshment of the mind it is possible also to obtain, if you are wary, free refreshment for the body.

The greengrocer or the pastrycook provides delectables of a simply irresistible nature ; you absent-mindedly help yourself to chocolate after chocolate or plum after plum while you continue to read, and it is astonishing how little you consume before your wants are attended to. But all these subterfuges take time to learn. It is not always easy for those who have led busy, useful lives, say, of administrating large provinces five times the size of Great Britain, to have to retire into private life in a country place where the main topics of conversation are the biting propensities of your neighbour's dog or the new hat of your neighbour's wife ; where your most serious occupation is paying your gardener or looking after a sister's child ; where it is impossible to get a book from the library within six months of publication, and then only if it be fiction ; where you are entirely dependent upon your daily

paper for your views of the situation and your knowledge of current topics of importance.

It is unendurable, if you are one of those who think that life is something to be lived to the full, every moment of it, to watch these cottage women standing hour after hour at their doors gossiping or merely gaping at the passers-by, or to pass men prematurely bowed, who crawl through life, throwing precious minutes, days, weeks, months, even years to the winds, having no further object in view than the killing of time. They do quite literally kill it. Time, the most neglected yet the most important of their gifts, they squander, even murder.

How it makes us long for that healthy spirit of competition which is the very zest of living in London, where each man strives to get the best out of himself in order to get out of the ruck and ascend one more rung of the ladder of fame. These country-folk seem to have no initiative, no dissatisfied longings ; there is no divine discontent, latent or otherwise, in their hearts. Even the better people are content to be cheated by their butchers or their milkmen ; they are too lazy to demand good return for their money. The malign spirit of ease and lassitude has eaten them up so that they have no zeal left. Such are the thoughts that cross the minds of us who are not wholly dead to the inward spark : we fret and fume when we feel that we too are likely to slip into the quagmire and to be lost for ever.

London is, then, our land of heart's desire : how we count the hours until release comes and we are able to throw ourselves for a day or a week blindly into the whirl of gaiety ! Our friends in town look upon us as

lunatics when we demand an early breakfast so that we may explore all the shops before lunch, to be followed by two theatres and supper at the Savoy : all we seem to see of their houses is between two and eight-thirty in the morning. It is almost sinful for us to remain under an ordinary roof when we are in London : we want to be up and doing, wandering the streets, surveying the crowds every moment of the day. It is with the greatest reluctance that we leave the crowded street for the no less crowded restaurant, or that, in its turn, for the theatre. There is so much to see and feel ; the throbbing heart of London thrills us ; the sight of the fog over the river is almost blinding in its beauty ; we are dazzled by the vision of the numbers of delightful experiences that await us at every turn. Surely Parliament Hill or the Embankment on a sunny, frosty morning, Piccadilly and St James's Park when darkness is falling over the land, Big Ben reflected in the water, the cheery lights of a Tube station, all these and thousands of other phenomena excite our æsthetic sense so that we feel their beauty permeate our being through and through. It is with a strange feeling of being once more at home that we enter our club and recline again at ease in those luxurious chairs, with all the periodicals at our command which we so sadly miss in Dorsetshire, and find friends there to talk to, men who have made their name in some niche of life which interests us extremely, men who talk with authority about the things that matter, not as village Shallows and Silences.

When we want music and light gaiety in London we don't have to endure songs and waltzes which were worn out already when we were children. When we want

advice, spiritual or medical, we do not have to resort to sermons or text-books green with age : we can sit at the feet of the Gamaliel or Ambrose Paré of the day. The best of everything is accessible ; we are as gods : into whatever shop we enter we are hailed almost as a divinity ; our wants are known before ever we open our mouths ; our idiosyncrasies are remembered alike by our tailor, our wine merchant, our tobacconist, our florist and our bookseller : each has something which he knows exactly suits our taste, and we buy and go on buying.

There lies the secret of London's charms. To enjoy London a man must have money : as Doctor Johnson most truly said, " He who is tired of London is tired of life," but we quickly find that when the money gives out London becomes tired of us : she is a fickle, greedy jade. She preens herself out in her very best and incites us to partake of all her pleasures, but the piper has to be paid. After our week or month of revelry we look sadly at our depleted purses and are staggered at the way that our scanty resources have disappeared : taxi fares, meals, books, clothes, theatres—all these seem to absorb money as dried-up pots of plants drink water. We return sadly to Dorset, to obscurity and niggard penury ; it is only there that we can live within our means without temptation.

For the first few days after we come back our home, our furniture, our household gods all alike look tawdry, meagre and commonplace—but we make up our minds to endure what cannot be cured and in a few weeks we become reconciled to our lot. The evenings begin to draw out ; we awake to the singing of a thousand birds, sunrise over the wooded hills is one vast mass of

rosy colour, the plants begin to put forth their shoots, flowers to bloom in the garden. Spring is at hand. Mother Earth is awaking from her long winter sleep, and as she shakes herself preparatory to donning her gorgeous fresh apparel of green we feel that the Pan pipes no longer insidiously whistle, "London—London—London," but "Come out into the dewy meads, into the dark forest and learn my secret; London is all very well for a day, but I am your true love for ever."

Nature begins again to smile, to break into sunny-hearted laughter; all the woods and the hills seem to shake with the large-hearted mirth that possesses our great mother as she brings to birth her children of beauty, children calculated to make glad the heart of man, to cause him to forget "the pain, the truths and lies" that so worry the mind of man in these times of travail and dire distress. Spring is here: we forget and forgive the ignorant rudeness of the shop assistants, the sloth of the working men and women, the lack of aim or ambition on the part of all the young boys and girls; we forget momentarily that we have lost touch with Fleet Street, Adelphi Terrace and Henrietta Street, or whatever part of London it is that so captivates our imagination, that we have cut ourselves off from the society we most covet of any in the world; the overpowering beauty of fields and streams, the eternal outpourings of joyous rapture on the part of all the birds captures our senses, and we are not so much content as overjoyed that our heritage is fallen unto us in a fair ground, in Dorset by the sea.

Now is the time for us to explore again all those haunts which we have so neglected since last summer

—the old village churches with their Norman archways and dirty, cobweb-ridden, rickety stairs leading to the belfry, from which we can spy out Camelot and Glastonbury, Lyme Regis hill and Egdon Heath. Now we can wander up that mill-stream in the Poyntington gully where the kingfisher used to display his gorgeous colours to the wary walker ; now we can ride out to Montacute and Cattistock and revel again in the stern beauty of the Tudor manor-houses and concoct fresh romances round their mullioned windows and flagged courts ; now is the time to gallop again over the green track which Charles II. used when he escaped from Trent to Charmouth, and imagine again that we hear the hoofs of the Parliament spies tracking him down, gradually drawing nearer and nearer. Now we can stand once more on Marston Hill and hear again the merry note of the horn as the master urges on his pack to take up the trail where he has located it ; now even the passers-by seem to be more awake and have something of the reflected glory of nature in their faces as they cheerily bid us “good-day.” It is good now to be away from the turmoil and the stress of cities, to be free, wind-blown on the Dorset Downs, battling homeward against the gale at night with the stars twinkling humorously overhead as if positively interested in the good-natured battle between man and the elements which fight with him only to brace him the more and render him hardy, healthy and active.

Let no one deride our Dorset now ; this is life at first-hand : we live what poets write—this is our compensation for the dark hours of winter. Let not the name of London be so much as mentioned. We have forgotten

the garish day—we have our moors and fells : what more can man desire ?

“Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare . . .
Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
You command a double realm ;
Labouring here to pay your debt
Till your little sun be set ;
Leaving her the future task :
Loving her too well to ask.”

IV

THE YEOVIL ROAD

YOU will remember, doubtless, that passage in Newman where he describes the Oxford-Newington road :

“When we ourselves were young, we once on a time walked on a hot summer day from Oxford to Newington—a dull road, as anyone who has gone it knows; yet it was new to us, and we protest to you, reader, believe it or not, laugh or not, as you will, to us it seemed on that occasion quite touchingly beautiful; and a soft melancholy came over us, of which the shadows fall even now, when we look back on that dusty, weary journey. And why?—because every object which met us was unknown and full of mystery. A tree or two in the distance seemed the beginning of a great wood or park, stretching endlessly; a hill implied a vale beyond, with that vale’s history; the by-lanes, with their green hedges, wound on and vanished, yet were not lost to the imagination. Such was our first journey; but when we had gone it several times the mind refused to act, the scene ceased to enchant, stern reality alone remained; and we thought it one of the most tiresome, odious roads we ever had occasion to traverse.”

Though we may, and probably do, entirely concur with Newman at the beginning, I have had a shrewd suspicion that the charms of a road were not really for

him as they were, let us say, for Hazlitt or Stevenson. For my part, though I have lived on the Yeovil road for nearly three years, every day discovers to me one or more of its mysterious charms.

In the first place, it is one of our two great links with London. That alone would make it wonderful. You who live in London can scarcely realise how we Dorsetshire bumpkins envy you. The sight of a big touring car flashing past our windows on a dreary November evening, when the wind is roaring round the house, the rain is lashing on the roof, and window-panes and autumn leaves are being scattered in maelstrom at the corner of the lane, starts a train of memories, a sickening longing that makes us almost physically ache for some of the good things which you enjoy. Oh ! to be in Fleet Street, and see the papers coming red-hot from the press ; to walk down Henrietta Street, and see our great gods of literature quietly, like ordinary men of the world, go in and come out of those publishing offices from which have emanated books which are as nectar to our thirsty souls ; to be able to get up and go out to this lecture, that theatre ; to hear this famous man preach, and that play ; all the riches of all the world are yours, and yet we hear that you pass them by unheeding.

If you would appreciate London, come to live in Dorsetshire. But we have our compensations. You do not fly to the window to see every passer-by, but we, Cranford-like, know the innermost secrets of every human being who passes our house. If perchance (great and rare occasion !) a stranger come our way, we tremble as he passes our gate. Is he coming here ? Is he going next door ? Who is he ? In three minutes

we have concocted fifty different plausible theories about his life and habits.

It is not that we are lonely. How could we be lonely on the main London to Exeter road, with all those nineteen different shining telegraph wires singing nineteen eternally different songs, while their winged messages of life and death, of trivial happenings and the fall of empires, flit along careless as swallows? How could we be lonely, with our postman twice a day and we listening for him as he tramps down the road? Knock, rattle, gate shut, in, out again, all down the road until he reaches our gate, and the breathless moment comes. Is he, is he, can he be, coming here? Yes? No? Hurrah! and then the terrible moment of anticipation. What an age Jane takes! and then only another rejected manuscript.

How should we be lonely, with our milkman and his clattering cans, the errand boys and hawkers, our one barrel-organ, the newsboy, our frequent callers, the piano-tuner and the collector of rates and taxes? Why, even the station bus sometimes passes our very doors, and the laundry van has to every time it goes to Milborne Port. Lonely? Not we. The first time I ever penetrated far along the Yeovil road was my second day here. I had heard so much of St Ivel and Lactic cheese that I thought I would go over to see the town from which it takes its name. I remember that I bicycled.

Newman may talk of mystery and imagination, but I found that my main thought was solely on the subject of bicycles. Why had I not walked, or, rather, why had I not walked without the encumbrance of a bicycle? In five and a half miles I had got off some

half-dozen times to climb hills, each of which seemed longer than a mile. Certainly there were moments when I forgot my short-sightedness in not looking up the contour before I started. There was my first glimpse over a hedge of the great flat-land studded with trees, stretching far away to Weston-super-Mare on my right ; there was the endless forest of Honeycombe on the hills to my left ; there was the castle of the lord of the manor exactly half-way, holding itself aloof both from the snobbishness of Sherborne or the yeomen of Yeovil ; there was the top of Babylon Hill, which immediately put me in mind of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, with its sudden descent through the cleft cliff, showing you the spot where so-and-so was murdered in 1797 ; there was Yeovil stretching far ahead in the valley, the town of milk and cheese. I will not dwell upon the town of Yeovil. Suffice it to say that it is the most unlikely place man could ever expect to see cheese produced. As soon would one expect to find Oldham, Bury and Wigan studded with fuchsia-strewn hedges and vast rose gardens.

It will be seen that there was nothing in this ride to endear the road to one more than any normal road. Its main attraction I found on my return was the vast number of little by-lanes which ran to meet it from every direction like rivulets down a mountain-side to meet the great broad river in the valley beneath. But since then I have grown to love this road ; it has seen me in many moods, and soothed me nearly always.

It was to the Yeovil road that I spouted my part of Iago preparatory to the yearly play ; it was that same day that I chanced upon the fair Desdemona shrieking her part also to the skies. It was along the Yeovil

road that I first took part in night operations, and after suffering agonies of apprehension, supposing every bush to be a bear and every tree an enemy scout, endured the humiliation of being captured by one of my own platoon. It was along the Yeovil road I first joined in the chase of the hare with Miss Guest's beagles, and many are the historic runs which we have had since, crossing and re-crossing this great artery of our country.

Pleasant, too, are the memories of sweeping along in the dark winter nights in the large car on the way to dine with some friend in Yeovil; but most poignant of all my recollections was the dread time when you were being operated on in Yeovil for appendicitis.

Do you remember (shall either of us ever forget?) that afternoon when the doctor came over to fetch you in his own car and I tried to race you on my bicycle, and the Canadian transport wagons kept getting in the way and stirring up a horrible dust? All praise to those same wagons; for some seconds they made us absolutely forget the torture of the separation and the horrible lonely nights.

Shall I ever forget hurrying, hurrying over on that Sunday morning to hear how the operation had gone off, and arrived sweating, breathless, dry of mouth, and staring mad, only to find that I was hours too early? I can smell the ether now. And then the sight of poor, shrivelled-up you, and I was dismissed for five hours! Did I tell you what I did? I pedalled up and down, up and down, that ghastly white road, praying, praying, and all the time the trees stared at me dully, and the birds went on with their careless song, when all the world should have stopped moving

by rights until we knew your fate. Then the reaction when I found that you were going to pull through. I never told you that I sat in the hedge at the top of Babylon Hill and cried—yes, cried—my heart out for pure joy.

And then the days of weary convalescence. How I used to rush up and down those hills ; no half-dozen stoppages to get off and walk now ; it was pounding, pounding all the way till I got to the nursing home, and how you used to rally me on my “ silly haste ” !

Well, that’s all over now. I only know that I should never have dared to take that road again had you died ; but now—well, I owe that road something. It sees me in moods grave and gay, swinging along with my platoon after a field day, all of us singing the school *Carmen* at the tops of our voices ; it has seen me struggling along in wind and rain on a house run, trying to train the youth of to-day, which is too speedy for me ; it has seen me walking along, head down, heedless of the beauties of its hedges, worrying out some dreadful problem of life. It has never really failed me ; always it has been a source of consolation—an inspiration to me.

Somehow it has become sacred to me. I cannot take friends or strangers along it ; I cannot bear to hear people call it dull. To me it is ever peopled with faery visions. I have so often whispered to it my castles in the air ; it has given me ideas and strengthened my ideals. It has almost become to me an epitome of life itself—an allegory, with its ups and downs, its fascinating byways ; its horrible monotony suddenly changing to heart-stopping beauty ; its drabness to hues myriad-coloured, rainbow-like. To one in trouble, tossed and

torn by doubts and heartache, I would say : Take such a road, make a friend of it, learn to love it, and you will discover a secret of nature not easily understood—certainly not analysable—but one which will remain with you to your life's end as something more precious than rubies.

V

WESTWARD HO !

THE summer term, with its failures and successes, its cricket and its higher certificates, was over ; camp, too, with its incessant downpour and consequent good-humoured but necessary "grousing," was over too, and we were once more free—free from the restriction of bells calling us to work, bells calling us to chapel, bells summoning us to food and play ; free also from bugles telling us to get up at unholy times in the middle of the night, bugles calling us to the cookhouse door, or to pretend we are orderly sergeants when we glory in but one stripe, bugles which trumpet at all sorts of inconvenient hours to warn us to dress for parade as we are on our way to wash : we cast our uniforms aside, we have a Turkish bath, we become clothed and in our right mind and set our face "up along" towards our home away down in the West. We decide that we will walk round the coast when we get into Somerset, so we leave the train at Minehead and with the minimum of luggage take old Jack Gardner's cart to Porlock. The first sight of the moors makes us gasp with pleasure : the long rolling hills purple and green in the dying sunlight call up visions of old days spent with the Devon and Somerset Stag-hounds, when we rode out on the wee Exmoor pony sometimes fifteen miles to the meet. The five miles are all too soon over, and we are in the long straggling street of Porlock, the gate of heaven. Hardly have we

time to admire the quaintness of the irregular cottages jumbled, as it were, haphazard together, before we are dumped down at the old Ship Inn, perhaps the most picturesque village hostel in the kingdom: the trellis, the huge chimney, the broken stone flags and the steep declivity on which it is built, the roses and creeper all climbing up the whitewashed walls all serve to accentuate its natural charm. Here mine host, corpulent and bearded, by name Rook (*absit omen*), invites us to stay: "all the really nice people stay here": a son of like corpulence, with the softest of voices, carries our luggage to the post office: we must sleep out: we climb curly stairs to a landing which is long enough for two cricket pitches, but slopes like the floor of a theatre, and we are ushered into bedrooms whose mantels are covered as ever with grotesque vases and photographs of deceased relatives, and walls bestrewn with the more abstruse sayings of St Paul. We descend to dinner (seven-thirty) and find the coffee-room of "The Ship" occupied by rather loud Americans and very subdued honeymoon couples.

The inevitable conversation on the merits of junket and Devonshire cream and why whortleberries are so called ensues: afterwards in the "dimmits" we explore the beauties of the village and find in the Rectory field a fair in full swing: a dance on the grass appeals to us most: partners are easily found, and the soft "burr" of our home maidens, combined with their apple-rosy cheeks, makes up for the deficiencies of the band and the unevenness of the "floor." "Be yew bidin' here long, my dearr?" The simplest of remarks has a glorious fascination for us, and thrills us with joy when pronounced in our native brogue

when we have been for long months in the cold grey North. The true maids of the West need little encouragement, but take all enjoyment that life offers without question. After a ride on the roundabouts and a voyage in the swings we retire to an early bed : what years ago it seemed when we last heard a bell or bugle.

We wake somewhat latish. As we stroll up to breakfast we are passed by people hurrying to the meet : cars, horses, walkers, all stream up the village street. Our meal is over in record time : we re-label our luggage to be sent on to Lynton by coach—goodness knows when next we shall see it—and we set off in the wake of the mass of the lovers of the hunt. A long three-mile pull brings us to the top of Hawkcombe Head : we are just in time. There over the moor in the Exford road come the hounds towards us : the pink-coated huntsman and whips show up against the heather in such a way that one's heart bounds with excitement, as if the hounds were already away hot on the scent. The crowd gets thicker and thicker : a more cosmopolitan lot it would be hard to imagine : professional photographers vie with sporting girl undergraduates from Newnham and Girton to get near the hounds with a view to "snapping" them : old farmers with rubicund faces mounted on moor ponies or farm nags enter into friendly conversation with Lord Fortescue on his splendid hunter : city clerks with wan faces lit up with the anticipatory joy of the hunter, so inherent a trait of all Englishmen, wearing clothes as ugly, ill-fitting, and unsuited to the moor as to the promenade, sit side by side with the strenuous walkers from the house-party at Arlington or Castle Hill. Suddenly a move, the "toot-toot" of the huntsman's horn, and they are

away to cast in the wood over by the sea : a long interval follows, then an excited cry from an unshaven gentleman in dark blue, "There 'er goes ! Gawn awaie—gawne awaie," and a hind bursts from cover, gently ambles down the combe and up the farther side of Oareford Hill. The unaspirated gentleman follows at top speed : he conducts a hunt on his own account and cannot realise why the whole field of six hundred does not follow him. The hind disappears from view behind a high ridge ; so also does the lone chaser, having already lost the trail : he has had his "day with the Devon and Somerset." This interlude finished, follows another long wait during which luncheon-parties are formed and horrible coverings of paper brown and white are littered over the virgin heather. Then a great stag dashes out of the wood at no uncertain speed and is headed from another near and denser covert by two intrepid followers of the hunt on horseback : he then tosses his head proudly and makes for the cleave running up Hacombe Water. Still no sign from the Master. Three more stags at intervals are found and have to leave their haven, and after some half-hour's law the hunt is away : hounds are let out of the farm where all but the tufters have been immured, and away they go, making a bee-line for Winsford, the centre of the moor. For about an hour we keep up, dashing over brook and rock, down ravine, up steep acclivity that most townsmen would hesitate to essay at a crawl, now jumping from tuft to tuft of the drying bog, now cutting through dense woods, black-cock and deer rising dismayed at the approach of wild man into their sacred precincts. After some six or seven miles straight running we find

ourselves with but a few stragglers on horseback on the horizon, and realise the hopelessness of picking up the trail and yet finding a bed for the night with it all : so we rest awhile in order to get our bearings, and decide to make an attempt to get into the Doone Valley. With the aid of the ordnance map and a meagre knowledge of the shapes of some of the more prominent ridges we hit Badgeworthy Water just opposite the world-famous valley.

Everyone tells everyone else how much he, she or they will be disappointed at the lack of magnificence of the district, the proportions of which Blackmore so exaggerated: for instance, we are always told that there is practically no water, and as for being unfordable—the idea is preposterous.

We thought as we reached the stream that it certainly looked swollen enough, but by dint of taking off our brogues and socks and rolling our trousers over our knees we should be able to cross with ease. I tried first, got half-way, stumbled on a stone and was swept ten yards down-stream before I could do more than gasp. I struck out for shore, wet to the skin and carrying gallons of water in my pockets: a coldish day, too. It was pure luck that we happened to be only a few hundred yards from the shepherd's cot, the one dwelling-place for miles. Here I was enabled to dress in the shepherd's Sunday clothes while mine were dried in the wind. Some rich milk and bread and cheese comforted me while my companion recovered from his paroxysm of delight at my fall; he, by the way, profiting by my disaster, crossed naked, holding his clothes high in the air. After about an hour we were able to continue our tramp, which we did down Badgery

Water: three miles of wood and water, a gorgeous waste as far as Malmsmead, a hamlet composed of a pack-horse bridge and two cottages where the most sumptuous teas are provided of cream, junket, whortleberries and cakes, in addition to ordinary fare. After tea we crossed the moor to Brendon and Rockford, where we entered the Lyn Valley, which is a really picturesque walk in the woods, with dense masses of forest on every side, and down in the depths beneath rush the torrential waters of the East Lyn, dashing turbulently against massive boulders one minute, lazily developing into a huge black salmon pool the next: the solitary occupants of this hinterland are the enthusiastic fishermen.

Perhaps some three miles of this follow, undisturbed by any creature save the birds, till suddenly there bursts upon our gaze a ghastly cottage with flaunting advertisements, notice-boards, and hordes of "trippers" taking tea, picture post card shops, copies of the cheaper and more vulgar papers being sold, and all the accompaniments of the sort of life that the moor lover most naturally hates: this, if you please, is the renowned Watersmeet. For the next half-hour you see the same scenery that you have been walking in on the moor spoiled, utterly ruined for commercial purposes. It is with a sigh of relief that we arrive at Lynmouth, where we find our luggage awaiting us at the Lyndale Hotel: here we dine with more Americans, who discuss at length the relative merits of Taft, Wilson and Roosevelt. A pleasant surprise awaits us in the waiter, who is unduly courteous: we discover afterwards that he was one of our college "Scouts boys" when we were up at Oxford. After dinner we explore the Valley of

the Rocks by moonlight and sit on a topmost peak watching the lights of South Wales across the Channel, the waves with their melodious lapping hundreds of feet below gently seducing us to sleep. Another early night: a long, deep sleep in a most commodious bedroom possessing that delicate aroma so peculiar to very old oak-panelled rooms in the West Country. The next day we started late as ever, this time mainly owing to the hairdresser, who only appears at Lynmouth from eight to ten A.M. A queue of about twelve were waiting for him at ten, so we did not get away till after eleven, having first arranged that our luggage should be sent on by coach to Ilfracombe. Again we ascended to Lynton, and starting through the Valley of Rocks we saw a sight that always causes unholy joy to the walker—a car turned back on the Lee Abbey Road, which is reserved for pedestrians only.

Of all houses that we should like to live in, after Compton Wynyates and Haddon Hall, we should choose ivy-mantled Lee Abbey, secluded and protected on all sides save from the sea, looking out over the far West Atlantic. Then we get on to the cliff path by Heddon's Mouth, first of innumerable creeks that suddenly spring on you as you round headland after headland all round the coast; then we turn inland up the clough to the Hunter's Inn, where lunch awaits us. A fatal thing it is to have a meal there, for an ascent of 1400 feet ensues to Trentishoe Church—but once on the top what a view spreads out before us. We get our first view of Lundy Island, sole guardian and protectress of the Channel: we can see the whole line of white cliffs on the desolate Welsh shore; we can look back over the distant hills we crossed yesterday, and,

away southward, see the whole range of Dartmoor standing out gigantic, cloud-capped, ruggedly bare, the glory of South Devon.

Between the two ridges of Trentishoe Barrows we pass over to the Great Hangman, where it is no hard task for the imagination still to picture the gibbet of a hundred years ago, with the body of the sheep-stealer and the wrecker creaking, swinging in the wind, an awful warning to the tempted villagers of Combmartin, whose long, thin white line of cottages suddenly appears 1500 feet below us. Thoughts of *The Mighty Atom* and the weird morbidity of the woman who has made this village notorious cannot be suppressed as we descend to this rapidly-increasing favourite haunt of the tourist. All its pristine glory has departed: once it was innocent, sweet, simple, a Devon fishing village: now it is loud, cheap, vulgar, red-bricked, with a toy promenade and concert hall—probably there are pierrots. We hurry through in order to lose the taste that has come into our mouth, make for Berrynarbor, still more or less primitive: here small girls greet us with “posies,” and we have tea at the pixies’ cottage, waited on by small infants who certainly ought to be pixies if they are not. Here we encounter that bane of nearly all old Devon villages, the locked church. Why is it that these old places of worship, redolent of an age that only has a fascination for the reverent, should be under lock and key as if against vandals and wanton iconoclasts? It is an everlasting blot on a nation’s name that her natives should be considered unfit to inspect her churches except under a strict surveillance. After tea we went round by Watermouth Castle, the home of the Bassetts, to

the Blackpool of the West—Ilfracombe. Here one expects the tripper, and knows that the shops and the townspeople in general lay themselves out to please him, nor are we upset by this. "In Rome," etc. Entertainments of every kind, from the rottenest of pierrots to the best of variety entertainers, Salvation Army on the sands, the novels of Garvice, Corelli, Allen Raine, *The Red Magazine* and *The Storyteller*, vie with one another to while away the weary hours for the Capstone strollers and the trippers from Tonypandy and other towns of South Wales which empty their inhabitants in thousands daily by boat into this most successful seaside resort. It is certainly a lesson in deportment and dress to watch this holiday crowd.

The predominant accent is undoubtedly Welsh: very little of the real rich Devonian brogue is heard: scarcely more than the Lancastrian tongue which, as a matter of fact, is strangely in evidence. The men appear to think themselves in undress until they have the Tyrol hat, encumbered by some fictitious club colour, which colour also encompasses their neck and ankles: if not a blazer, a coat of innumerable pleats, all entirely useless but deliciously ornamental: buttons and frills in gay profusion adorn this tunic, tucks taken in here and let out there accentuate the charms of the manly waist, and the trousers vary between black, dark blue, and perfectly creased white cricket flannels. The result, if incongruous, at any rate causes the wearers eminent satisfaction, to judge from their supercilious, vacuous laughter and the "glad eye" which they present to the equally evilly-dressed flappers who join them on the promenade. The principal features of the girl's clothing are her stockings, always open-

work of a delicate fawn or flesh colour, covered with black patent-leather high-heeled indoor shoes, the soles of which are invariably a rich yellow. The rest of her outside raiment is variegated in colour as the rainbow : her frock is cut as short as decency permits, and tight-fitting enough to prevent effectually any movement quicker than a crawl. Her headgear, if she wears any, is of that peculiarly misleading type, the bee-hive bonnet, which hides her ravishing face only too successfully. All the passer-by can see is a mouth writhed in contortions to convey pleasure or boredom at the advances of the gay youth : "the inviting mouth" is, I suppose, a concomitant of "the glad eye" : at any rate, by their mouths must they be judged.

The whole occupation of these holiday-makers is to stroll and loiter, flirt and be entertained. It is all very harmless, very quietly romantic and yet intensely funny to the unthinking onlooker, who as usual sees all the game. More pathetic is the crowd of elders who sit and wait in the pavilion, all through a cold and rainy August day, knowing that their annual release from drudgery is fast dwindling away and that they are not making the most of it ; in fact are not making anything of it, but just frittering away the time, fretting, "grouching," perhaps knitting, while the husband complains over the top of *The Daily Mail* when Joe wants another penny, he's "so hungry." It is curious to notice the number of parsons that mingle with the gay throng : perhaps they are acting on the principle that a complete change of environment is the only perfect holiday, for their clothing and manners contrast very forcibly with the birds of paradise that jostle and hustle all round them.

One is tempted to dwell on the merits and demerits of a great seaside resort like Ilfracombe at too great length. We must move on, the Clovelly boat awaits us, by means of which we cut off the long walk round Barnstaple and Bideford Bay : we only do this because we know it so well. For anyone who has not explored North Devon thoroughly we recommend him not to miss the walk from Ilfracombe by the Fuchsia Valley of Lee to Mortehoe, on the Point of which so many mariners in ancient times were led to their doom by the grandfathers of the present villagers in order that the wreckers might loot the foreign vessels. Thence through Woolacombe, at which tiny spot everyone you ever knew at one time or another has stayed, to Saunton Sands and "Barum." Strangers to the county would be ill advised, too, to miss the far-famed Northam, where a thousand years ago the Danes, under Healfdene, whose descendants still live in the vicinity, as their names still testify, gained their first great victory in the West. Horden is the natural evolution of Healfdene, and there are many Hordens round the bay. Bideford Bridge calls up visions of the Rose of Torridge and *Westward Ho!* and one can almost see Amyas Leigh and John Oxenham on the quay in the company of other gallants of the spacious days of Great Elizabeth, or the *Revenge* of Sir Richard Grenville seeking rest once more this side of the bar.

The golf-course appeals to its own crowd. To us "Westward Ho!" stands for something more primitive and far finer, but lest we become captious in our criticism let us face the west along the rabbit warren, "strictly private" still, as in the days of *Stalky & Co.*, and make for Bucks Mills, the village hardly

second to Clovelly for beauty, and second to none for barbaric simplicity and natural charm. Here it is that we see the "swarthier alien crew": tradition has it that the sailors from the Spanish galleons found a haven here, and their descendants live there still. Whatever else they are, they are not English, Spanish or Italian. Southern they certainly are, and a more hospitable crowd it would be hard to find. From here to Clovelly takes half-an-hour in a row-boat, the best means of conveyance, for there is a good chance of being cut off by the tide if you try to walk, and here again we meet, we who have crossed by steamer and those who have explored the inner secrets of the mouths of the Taw and Torridge.

Of Clovelly so much has been said in story and song, so much canvas covered depicting its outward charm, that we are inclined to be reticent. We frankly dislike the ghastly display of advertisements at every corner, but our dismay at that turns to delight at the luggage carrier and the postman; no vehicle, of course, can descend or ascend the so-called street, for "street" is merely in this case a euphemism for long steps: it is like climbing terrace steps in a very pleasant nightmare: but we are explaining what everyone knows already, and we are fain to leave the masses of people to their enjoyment: they are the same crowd that frequent the Capstone and pavilion at Ilfracombe, so we make for the open country and Hartland, the wild places, once more towards the land of Stephen Hawker and King Arthur.

It's a wild country we find ourselves in as we get out on to the heights again over Hartland village, and many and weird are the stories the village folk can tell you as the wind whistles round the chimney corner in the old smithy cottage: " 'Tez the virstest breath of Tergargle,

that 'er be." Wherever you go from now on down the coast of Cornwall you will find the shade of Tregeagle, scoundrel steward at Llanhydrock, who sold his soul to the devil and is continually trying to escape from his torment, chased by the diabolic minions of Lucifer. When the wind whistles cold on the moor of a night the cottagers clasp their young ones closer to their breasts lest "Tergargle" should snatch them away; and really the wind does sound like a spirit in pain on these lone moors.

From Hartland we turn away south-west down the now absolutely desolate coast, not a house or hamlet in sight till we reach the village of Morwenstow, where "Passon" Hawker, last of the old race, preached and hymned, hunted and wrote poetry. No more can we see his strong, healthy figure coming up the village street, with top-boots, fisherman's jersey and sou'-wester all complete, nor more hear his hale and hearty welcome to eat and drink with him which he gave to every stranger he met: now we are left with his works and a vision of the true Cornish patriot ballad-writer only—

"And have they found the where and when,
And shall Trelawney die?
There's twenty thousand Cornishmen
Will know the reason why."

Unlike most of the churches on the North Cornish coast, which stand alone as beacons to the sailors by day, Morwenstow Church is secluded in a hollow nestling among the trees. The next chance of coming into contact with humanity is Bude, which attracts great crowds now, owing to the advertisements: on railway placards it seems to be boomed more than any

other place in England. Golf-links and big hotels are now to be found every ten miles round the coast : gone entirely is the solitude of Hartland and Morwenstow : char-à-bancs, coaches, dog-carts, motors, bicycles pass us all down the road till we again get on to the cliffs-path and the rough track towards Boscastle and Tintagel, the castle of which is entirely ruined by the oppressive modern mansion styled, I believe, the Tintagel Castle Hotel. For visions of Tristram and Iseult, King Arthur and King Mark we must dive once more into the heart of the county past Camelford (locally supposed to be Camelot) to Dozmaré Pool, where at least there is a sense of the eerie and the ancient. Here it was that the luckless Tregeagle had to drain the water with the broken oyster-shell, tantalised by innumerable little devils until he broke away in his agony to Roche Rock : here it was that Sir Bedivere threw Excalibur and King Arthur sailed away in his royal barge.

Under the shadow of Brun Ylla, or Brown Willy, by the side of this sombre pool, it is easy to conjure up these and many other legends of the past without worrying at too great length on their authenticity ; but we are now miles out of our way and here, I think, I had better leave you. From Dozmaré you have a whole county from which to choose : shall it be the rough Bodmin moor, the real Cornwall, or the soft seductive south of Looe and Fowey, or, again, shall we get back to the north coast and pursue our original plan past Port Isaac ? In every case you will find it will repay you.

It is like one's plans : we buy an ordnance map and decide that we will walk from Minehead to Plymouth or Lyme Regis all round the coast : we plot our twenty

miles a day : we start : as a matter of fact we have started some dozen times, but never have worked out the idea yet. A holiday, to be a real, enjoyable, free time, must be formless : just as long as you like a place, stay in it : don't stay at the regular beauty spots just because everyone says you ought to, but amble along, and, above all, walk, and if you think that is a dull sort of means of progression read Hazlitt and Stevenson on walking tours first. If they don't inspire you, don't go : try London in August ; that will be nearer your idea of true bliss. But if, as is more likely, these two geniuses fill you with a desire to be up and away, with the moor wind playing through your hair and the turf springing under your feet, so that you shout, dance and sing, capering madly about at the mere joy of living, take a ticket to Minehead, a knapsack with the minimum of luggage, a map and *one* book, be it Browning, Milton, Shakespeare, Chaucer, the Manual of Military Training, or a volume of Essays, it matters not, and let yourself loose—you will probably get no further than we have led you : you may spend days, weeks, or even months, but it will be all the same : you will go back to work refreshed in mind, and soul, and body, imbued with fresh energy and ready to undertake any duty that the world lays upon you cheerfully, with a memory that will last you as long as you live of a country that is always ready for you and that will sympathise with your every mood. “Devon, O Devon, in wind and rain.”

VI

THE HIGHLANDS, 1915

“IT’S only like Scotland when I’m in bed and the wind is loud and I hear the geese. Then I think of the trees all standing out in the dark and wet, and the hills too, the way they’ve done for years *and* years, and the big lonely places with nobody in them, not a light even, and I get the croodles and the creeps, for that’s Scotland, full of bogies. I think Scotland’s stone dead.” Everybody remembers this typical utterance of the young girl Bud in *The Daft Days* of Neil Munro. It has recurred to my mind a hundred times these last few weeks.

At the end of July I unwillingly paid my first visit to Harley Street. It was a short interview that I was granted with the famous specialist for my guineas, but it was precise to a degree. “You must go high, Mr Mais,” he said, after hearing my story and cross-examination, “somewhere in the Highlands. No writing; only a few books. You have to learn to ‘slack,’ fish, golf, walk. Sleep will probably not return to you for a year at least. You are in exactly the same case as a motor without brakes—you have the potential power, but no control. You have to shed all this worry, these nightmares and insomnia. You will be of no use to the world until you do. Your first duty is to make yourself fit, and to do this you must let everything slide. . . . My fee? Oh

yes, a cheque will do nicely. Thank you, Mr Mais. Good-morning, good-morning."

I was once more upon the streets, now an outcast, unable to write, unable to read, unable to teach, unable to fight, unable to do any of those things that are very life-blood to me. For the first hour or so I felt rebellious. After all, what could such a man tell of my real condition? How should he know of my inner tribulation of mind? To go to Scotland would only mean that I should brood more and more and become introspective where I ought to be active and hard at work. As usual, however, my wife convinced me of my error, and I left King's Cross the next morning feeling almost criminal in taking a holiday at such a time. To my surprise the train was crowded with pleasure-seekers, all of whom were only holding themselves in until they crossed the border. Once in Scotland they began, as I did, to rush from side to side of the carriage to get the best viewpoint, and as Edinburgh drew nearer became more and more agitated and restless, until at last we slowed up at the great Waverley Station, at the threshold of the land of romance, about to breathe the air that inspired Burns and Scott, Dunbar and Henryson, W. E. Henley and Robert Louis Stevenson, Andrew Lang, John Buchan, Neil Munro, Ian Hay, Frederick Niven, Cunninghame Graham, and a hundred more romantic writers of to-day and yesterday.

Our luggage disentangled, we stand a few minutes later gasping afresh at the beauty of the finest street in the world. "Romance?" The very word assumes a new, a more real meaning when we gaze down Princes Street, enraptured by the setting sun shedding a warm glow over the towering castle on its impregnable rock.

After dinner we turn out again to get another view of a scene we cannot behold too often . . . but this time are disgusted by the glare of the electric lights of the three vast kinema "palaces" which attract the multitude of kilted Highlanders, the shop assistants and clerks. Hoardings displaying the vulgar faces of low comedians, of poisoned heroines and trapped villains stare out at us from the front of these places of amusement. We retire to bed crestfallen, hoping for better things on the morrow, when we shall be in the land of the osprey and eagles, the red deer and the grouse, surrounded by purple hills and snow-capped peaks. The morrow comes, and we slowly make our way by the Highland Railway, which is nearly as bad a line as its name is good, to the haven where we would be—Kingussie. After hours of tedious, slow travel through vast hills and vales we reach our destination, the capital of Badenoch.

To our surprise there is not a breath of air. True, there are the hills, the Cairngorm range, standing up proudly in the middle distance: perhaps no wind can penetrate these heights. In a panic we feel that we have come to the wrong place; this is as hot as Bournemouth, as enervating as Dorset.

For a solid fortnight we endured tropic heat, varied only by thunderstorms. We essayed a few of the smaller climbs, but derived little benefit therefrom. Toiling up cairn after cairn, over steaming heather, with flies and hornets as our only companions, we felt only as Christian felt as he climbed the Hill of Difficulty; at the top we had only strength left to cast ourselves flat on the soft mossy ground and endeavour to regain our breath, tortured by insects. The superb

views could scarcely rouse us from our feeling of inertia, of utter blank . . . to bathe in some deep, whisky-coloured burn on the way down afforded some relief, but little of romance did we gain from these strenuous exploits. "Scotland was stone dead." Bud was right. Then I discovered one day that "Ossian" Macpherson had lived here in his early days. *Ossian*, that marvellous romance of romances, which so deeply affected the whole outlook of literature in the eighteenth century; *Ossian*, once so famous as to be Napoleon's only bed-book, so gigantic in aim and achievement as to be heralded by Hazlitt as worthy to be included in that brief list of precious books which ranked with Dante, Homer and the Bible; *Ossian* owed its conception to Kingussie. I hurried to the local bookseller, a surly, laconic man, with no interests, not even that of making money, to procure a copy. He had never even heard of it.

"A prophet is not without honour," I thought, and retired beaten. I wrote to London. The best my agent there could do was to send me a two-volume edition of 1806. How are the mighty fallen! I bethought me again of this humble schoolmaster who had so much faith in his country's idylls as to foist this stupendous work on a credulous country, declaring the work to be a true translation from the Gaelic, who had with the proceeds of his own work been able to found a powerful family, erect a mansion of huge proportions, and eventually to be buried in Westminster Abbey, only to be buried in oblivion a hundred and fifty years after to all except the few.

Surely, I thought, romance is dead. On my shorter walks the sights and sounds I met only clinched this

point of view the more. Far away on the hills I met no living soul ; no man any longer tried to wrest Scotland's secret from her. The hotel was always busy as a hive with passing motorists, but they talked only of food and routes—and the war. If they walked, they walked for ten minutes to the golf-course and hit a small white ball, and walked after it and hit it again, day after day, their heads down, unconscious of the appeal of the moorland and glen around them. Meanwhile I myself did nothing. I could not bring myself to fish ; golf I despised. Suddenly, in a fit of boredom, I bought, or rather paid for, while an enthusiast chose for me, three golf-clubs. The day I did so the weather changed. A fresh breeze blew, the sun still shone, and there was a whispering in the trees which foreboded better things. The place seemed immediately to begin to live. I played my first game of golf. Like most beginners, I played well, far too well to last, but just well enough to make me catch the fever. For four weeks I have played round and round that course, sometimes three times, always twice, daily ; and with it, *mirabile dictu*, I have regained romance. It is hard to explain. To-day I am tired, listless, irritable, worried . . . it is all over ; we are going away ; everything is going away. I suppose it was—I may as well confess that I know it was—the friends I have made.

It is all very well talking about romance coming to the lonely man in lonely places, but I have found it in a circle of new-made friends in crowded places. Shall I ever forget those riotous games we have played, you and I, dear friend of a fortnight, those tees where we have sat half through the game and gazed out over the purple distance and watched the shifting, ever-changing

lights on wood and glen, on moor and crag ; golf has only accentuated the beauties that we could not properly realise alone. To enjoy solitude, as Bacon most truly says, one must be either a beast or a god. Most of us are neither one nor the other, but a mixture of each ; loneliness seems to-day of all evils the most horrible—that must be because I have just seen you off in your south-bound train going Hampsteadwards, while we are bound for a stage farther north, for more golf, and, please God, new friends, who will not be, we know, as true or as fine as you. But perhaps, after all, it may be as Samuel Butler says, it is not separation that matters ; the awfulness is in the parting. Time will cure this intolerable ache. There cannot be ecstasy without pain. Heavens ! How much unknown ecstasy there must have been for the pain to be so severe, the wound to be so raw.

All the more precious moments come back to me now kaleidoscope fashion : that day we wandered up Glenfeshie, riding over impossible moor-tracks, marked by optimistic Mr Baddeley as “second-class road,” on more impossible bicycles hired at thirteen-and-six the week (what a price !), yours without brakes—like me—mine whose tyres seemed unable to contain the amount of fresh air we pumped into them for more than five minutes at a time. Shall we easily forget that lone shepherd’s croft to which, in despair, we ran and found, to our unbounded astonishment, a brand-new repairing outfit which cured those same tyres of their insane desire to be bereft of air ? That was the day, too, on which we bathed, without towels or garment of any kind, in ice-cold water in the lashing rain, when the driest place for clothes or flesh was in

the leaping waters of the tarn—when we came home in thunder and lightning in the middle of a cloud-burst to finish up with. Do you remember the day we watched that dour old Scotsman fishing in the Spey, all unconscious of the fact that a cow was quietly chewing all his clothes, which he had left on the bank? How we brutally waited for the great moment when understanding would flash on him, and how we laughed when it did! How fine those evening games of consequences or billiards or “auction” after such exploits seem to me now; how we all “ragged” round those tables until we got so tired that we almost snored as we played. Sleep? Shall we ever sleep again as we have slept here? What joy to find that it needs a “hefty” knock at the door to waken us to tell us that we are already half-an-hour late for breakfast, that all is cold and practically nothing left! How different this from a few short weeks ago, when we heard every step in the street, every rattling cart, every dog bark and cock crow, and longed for the household to wake so that we could reasonably get up without fear of being thought demented. Then there was the day that we bathed in five different lochs in eight hours, and each of us fought over our individual preferences.

But these excursions were all the better for being few and far between. How much we relished it when friends as a special treat took us out to Loch Laggan in their car for the day, and we saw Glencoe and Ben Nevis in the distance and wondered what they were, when we suggested buying Ardverrick and turning it into a big private school for the sons of the aristocracy: “deer stalking, grouse shooting and superb fishing in the loch part of the regular school curriculum; no

extras except for waterplanes." Do you remember the imaginary prospectus we drafted, and how we laughed all the way home at the various pleasaunces that Dick said would make admirable cricket and football grounds for our school? Shall we ever forget those games of "whist" with the "commercial" when we had become too obstreperous for the dear old fat ladies in the drawing-room? Their wonderful cheeriness—"How goes it, Davy boy?"—and their superb brogue? But it is the golf that has made Kingussie a place to which we long to return in happier days. Do you remember your father in his keenness suggesting that we should always keep a record of our scores to show how we were improving, and how Milligan and I tied on the eighteenth hole with a score of 139, 22 each for the last hole? I, who beat Bogey for three holes my second day out.

Golf has a romance all of its own, untellable, uncanny, but none the less a romance. And when golf palls (sad confession, but you cannot play all day!), do you remember those short strolls over Spey Bridge when we took our tea out and bathed and spun yarns about outlying cottages, especially the Mile House of Nuidhe (glorious romantic name), where the three little bare-legged flappers always used to wave to us, which you said was occupied by German spies because you saw the motor bicycle flash in the sun outside the cottage once or twice? That was where the great Galloway bull of glorious black sheen used to lie and moan quietly to himself in what you asserted to be "the German Morse code buzzer system." Great, never-to-be-forgotten days these, days that will help us to go back to work like a giant refreshed with wine, to gird up our

loins and strive as we shall have to in the time that is coming, days that we shall be able to look back on when the black mood is on us and thank God for.

We looked for romance on the heights, in the Larig Pass, on Sgoran Dhu, which we ever meant to climb but never did, in the green, fairy, pixy circles on the hill-side . . . but it is a topsy-turvy world. We have found it indeed, evasive romance, but we have found it in the unlikely places, in the hotel lounge, in the ugly, bare, white-washed churches, on the station platform, but most of all on the golf-course.

It is like watching a kettle boil or waiting in for the postman for the letter which never comes. It is always when you despise Fortune that she comes plucking you by the garment ; so with romance, dearest thing in the world, greatest and most to be desired gift of the gods—when we forget it, before we realise it, it is upon us, we are enmeshed by it—and only now that we see the last and trailing glory of its fleeting passage do we realise that all the time we have had that for which we had been most earnestly praying, and now—now it is going from us.

VII

CORNWALL

i

I HAD long been waiting for the final impetus that should drive me away from the streets of the town. The intense heat made me long for the blue waste of the Atlantic and the south-west wind. The whim had seized me suddenly and I had just time to make a hurried packing and catch the three-thirty from Paddington for Penzance. Most people now have at least some idea of the pleasant journey through Berkshire, Somersetshire, Devon and Cornwall, with its changing scenery and numerous places of interest, so it will be sufficient for me to say here that I reached my destination quite safely, it being close on midnight when the train drew up for the last time and I changed into the station bus, which conveyed me up the cobbled street towards the hotel I had chosen. After turning and twisting by road and hill path we eventually turned into the drive, and the odour of the night-scented stocks, the appearance of many-coloured flowers, the tall pines, and here and there the graceful palms, all combined to make the place appear almost Oriental to me, who was visiting southern Cornwall for the first time since infancy. It was indeed as if I had been suddenly transplanted to the tropics. The very staircase of the hotel smelt. I do not know how to describe it. There is a smell which attaches itself to

old houses in the West Country that only West Country people seem to notice. To me it is the subtle reminder of home and childhood on Exmoor, and it tells me more of Lyonesse than anything else I know.

Without casting any aspersions on people with different ideas of holiday-making from my own, I may say that I infinitely prefer the open country to the town, and on the Sunday morning, which broke fair and cloudless, I made an early breakfast and then started to explore the coastline. I made my way to Newlyn, where, unluckily, the tide was out, so I was not so impressed by the artists' colony as I should have been. A mile or two farther on brought me to the far-famed Mousehole, a place of pilgrimage for everybody visiting in the neighbourhood. It was pleasant to leave the coastguard track here and make my way through golden fields of corn, treading over stiles unlike any I have ever seen elsewhere. In Devonshire a stile is an impassable stone barrier of great height, the one part of the field which no man can penetrate. In Cornwall it consists of five thin slabs made in the likeness of a gridiron, so that you jump from one to the other. It was on the heights above Mousehole that I met my first acquaintance. An elderly man, obviously lost, beckoned to me from a distance as I was striding along, and on my approach told me that he was on his way to Lamorna Cove, but had lost his bearings. We joined forces, and on the road I discovered that he was a South African about sixty-five years old, hale and cheerful, and one who walked his eighteen miles every day all through the summer. He was marvellously fit, for he kept up with me without an effort, and even set the pace some part of the way. We dodged in and

out among farm buildings possessed of immensely picturesque names, and very soon found ourselves looking down on a cove which I despair of describing. In the first place, it was as unlike Mousehole or Newlyn as possible. It had a tiny harbour and a perfect little oval bathing beach, and on either side of the valley was a densely overgrown tract of country, mainly consisting of fern and bracken. Flying about in the August sun were gaily hued butterflies and bees of colours such as I had never dreamed of. It was just possible to distinguish in the woods the roofs and chimneys of three or four cottages, but otherwise the cove was devoid of human habitation.

Having drunk in the beauty of the place from above, we descended in search of lunch, and luckily found an hotel in a garden overflowing with plants of an exotic growth. We regaled ourselves with all sorts of good things, not the least among which we counted the generous bowl of Cornish cream which our hostess provided. The dining-room of the hotel was littered with copies of artistic papers, which testified to the usual type of visitor to be found here, and after concluding our repast we walked by the side of the coast up to our knees in bracken until we came to a great crag called Taterdhu. After spending a very pleasant time here we returned to Lamorna Cove, where we had tea and more cream, and came back to Penzance by the same sea-coast route we had taken in the morning in order to revise our impressions of Mousehole and Newlyn now that the tide filled the harbours. Certainly it made a vast difference to see the water lapping the walls of the cottages, and in the evening light the riot of geraniums and fuchsias against the white cottages certainly

imprinted themselves on the memory more pleasantly than anything we had seen on the outward journey.

The Monday morning opened with a heavy downpour of rain of the most depressing description, but, as my holiday was short, no rain could be allowed to damp my ardour. I therefore set out at ten-thirty to break the back of Cornwall, crossing from Penzance to Gurnard's Head. The grounds of the hotel were extensive and contained numerous paths, one of which I took and at once lost my exact idea of north-west and north-east. When I emerged from the lodge gates on to the high-road and asked my way I was astonished to find it was "straight on and up the hill." Again and again I asked the carters and market-women and gipsies. They one and all assured me that I was right, so on I kept, gradually drawing higher and higher out of the town, until at length I reached an open moor of the most barren and disquieting nature. I found on referring to my guide-book and a mounted postman that I was in one of the most cherished haunts of the archæologist. Close to me on my left hand was a circle of stones known as the Nine Maidens; on my right, visible for miles, was the Mulfra Quoit, with an ancient British village close beside it; behind me lay the vast sweep of the southern sea; before me innumerable heads and shafts and chimneys belonging to disused mines; dotted all over the landscape were broken-down cottages half in ruin, and it was without exception the most uncanny, the most mysterious bit of country through which I have ever travelled. Nowhere could I discern any living creature. All day I met no sojourner like myself, for only local people frequent this part, and the path was none too easy to find. When I was just

beginning to despair of hitting the right track—those on the moor go off at every angle in the most bewildering manner—the sea on the north suddenly opened up and I stood on the ridge of the peninsula, with the ocean behind and before me. Cromlechs and tumuli stood out on every side, alternating with logan stones and quoits. Pushing my way quickly over the wide moor, I descended the northern slopes until at last I emerged on to the main road just outside Treen, where I saw my only sign-post of the day. To the left, apparently, I was within measurable distance of St Just, Morvah and Land's End: to my right, close to Zennor, on the way to St Ives; behind me lay Gulval and Penzance. Passing the Gurnard's Head Hotel I went down towards the headland itself and there met with a reward for my arduous walk that beggars all description. Lamorna had been like some jungle creek in the South Seas, while Gurnard's Head, which I had seen so often in a photograph, has just a vast majesty of crag and great smashing waves. It is the kind of place where you instantly picture a wreck—in the mind's eye you see at once great ships, powerless to move of their own accord, being battered to pieces against the jutting crags by the merciless, gigantic, roaring waves. I had the headland to myself, and for miles to the west and east I had an uninterrupted view of the finest rock scenery imaginable. It was colossal in its grandeur, far beyond the power of any picture to reproduce. It must be seen to be believed.

After lunching at the hotel I took the stile pathway to St Ives and, after covering a few miles, reached Zennor, an ideal spot, I should imagine, for the artist and the writer who want quiet and beauty combined.

A general store "licensed to sell tobacco and snuff," the Tinner's Arms, a substantial towered little church, a village stream, five or six cottages, and there you have Zennor, but round it are rocks and caves and moors. I registered a vow to go back as soon as ever I could find time. The telegraph wire is an infallible guide here, for the roadway winds and is always avoided by the true pedestrian. The stile-path follows the wires all the way to St Ives, and the walk is splendid until you come to the outlying part of the town. St Ives is a large place, and there are picturesque clusters of houses and two splendid bathing beaches. I had tea at a wonderful old country house, now turned into an hotel, the grounds of which surpass in beauty quite a number of far more famous ones. I was told there was not a bed to be had in the whole town until the 25th of September, and apparently St Ives is one of the most popular health resorts in England. Carbis Bay is a delicious little cove, with splendid facilities for bathing and golf, even if it has no grandeur of rocks. At St Erth I had to wait for half-an-hour, and was amused to find a notice requesting me not to pick the flowers that strewed the banks of the platform. Palms flourish here almost as well as the station advertisements.

I spent the evening of the Gurnard's Head-St Ives walk in watching the moon gradually rise over the sea. The fishing-smack fleet had dropped their will-o'-the-wisp safeguarding lights. A prettier sight I have never seen than the flickering yellow streaks shown by the head-lamps on the waves. On the Tuesday morning I set out down Alverton Road, passed by the docks, first having waited to see the Scilly Isles steamer leave, and

then struck out on to the sandy path by the beach for Marazion. Although Mount's Bay would seem from the map to be enclosed and dull, even here the waves beat ceaselessly on the shore and the scene is pure Atlantic. There was a heavy south-west gale and white clouds came up from Land's End. I only encountered one storm, however, and took refuge from that in Marazion station. Pursuing my journey, I was soon in the village which owns St Michael's Mount, and as the tide was out I was enabled to walk over the stone causeway on to the island home of Lord St Leven. From all points of view the mount is delectable, but from none so beautiful as from the very foot, the harbour by the gates. Here are clustered close together five or six white-washed cottages, with doors of a peculiarly vivid and picturesque green, each owning the red card bearing the inscription, "Not at home. A man from here is serving with his Majesty's Forces." The castle gates were closed. Leading up to the house on either side was a vast medley of bracken and fern, broken only by a field or two of rich golden corn. For half-an-hour I dangled my legs over the quay and drank in the champagne-like breeze. Then I turned back to the mainland and lunched in the company of four fishermen, who regaled me with stories of seventy-pound congers caught within a few yards of the table, for the coffee-room of the hotel I was lunching in is situated within ten feet of the water.

ii

I now took my way up the main long street Lizardwards in search of adventure and was told that Prussia Cove was "not bad." I determined to find it, and so

went on up the road, which here is wide, well metalled, and very lonely, passing over bare downs and moorland with the wildest scenery on either side. On my left I came across a square, white, ugly building, the windows of which were all smashed, bearing the inscription, "Trevelyan School, 1839," and I wondered what sort of place this ramshackle old hall might once have been and whence it recruited its pupils. Close to it was an old country house, and a little farther on a public-house boasting a sign-post "The Falmouth Packet" sent me back on the instant a hundred years to the old coaching days. How little changed this wild West Country is! There still remain the mine-shafts and chimneys dotted all over the moorland like mole-hills and lonely spires. The gardens of the whitened cottages still show a galaxy of red flowers which have blossomed year by year for an æon of time. The swarthy villagers have lost but little, if any, trace of their Spanish origin and look on all fair-skinned visitors as foreigners. An enticing sign-post beckoned me to visit Goldsithney and Acton, but I held my course until I came to the one for which I was searching—Prussia Cove. Then only did I deviate from the broad beaten track, with its populace of market-women and lame old men, and dive down towards the sea. On either side of the road I passed cottages hidden from the roadside by overgrown shrubs and dense thick trees until I reached an opening which showed me the great gaunt cliffs of the Lizard quite close on my left, for all the world like Hartland Point, and before me a quaint old-world country house at the head of a glen. Having passed this and an antique inn with the rising sun crudely painted under the eaves in yellow and staring blue, I was stopped by a gate on

which was written (not printed): "The use of this drive is a privilege, so the public will be generous enough not to abuse it by leaving gates open or wantonly destroying the property of others." I turned into the drive, and in a few moments found myself by the foot of a headland. On my right was a miniature creek riddled with cavernous openings, two cottages nestled against the sides of the combe, and cacti, palms and French beans were all growing together right down to the water's edge. Three fishing-boats were drawn up out of reach of the sea by the cliff-side, and steps had been rudely cut in the rock to permit of men going down to the sea-level. Round to the left was a new house, and I clambered on to the tennis court belonging to it, and from thence reached the rocks, which were covered with seaweed and a weird red and yellow plant of exotic growth. The sea was beating fiercely up each tiny inlet and not a soul was in sight in any direction. I went up to one of the cottages and found a man of about forty, who told me that a foreigner owned the new house and had bought all the surrounding country. He left in 1914, so that it was now deserted. I climbed once more out of the valley and presently followed a path which led to a village called Perranuthnoe, and again hit upon a cove, rather less wild than that of Prussia, for it boasted a church, an inn and a post office. I next struck across the fields for Marazion, and after half-an-hour's walk through cornfields, the golden glamour of which showed up against the blues and greens of the sea with incredible beauty, I once more came out by the cemetery and returned to the Godolphin for tea. I then sank down on the sand, with my back against the sea-wall, and watched the changing lights of St

Michael's Mount, which by this time was completely encircled by water and looked, in consequence, infinitely grander. Presently I returned along the sea-path to Penzance, and then shifted my quarters to St Ives, which I reached at ten o'clock.

On the Wednesday I started off in the direction of Land's End, with the intention of revisiting Zennor and exploring the caves. The clouds were threatening and low, sweeping out from the west in majestic array, full of rain, but it was not before I had reached the shelter of the Tinner's Arms at Zennor that the down-pour began, so I had the satisfaction of watching the rain lashing against the windows while I enjoyed a meal. The waitress told me that every bedroom in the hamlet was booked until October, so I had to relinquish all designs of staying in this wild place. After luncheon I explored the church again and saw what I had missed before—the engraving of the mermaid who was so entranced by the singing of the squire's son that she came up from the sea and enticed him to follow her into the deep waters, Ulysses and the Sirens reversed. I then struck out for Zennor Cove and found the going extremely difficult. There was no definite path, so I had to jump from rock to rock and climb through bramble and ferns neck-high. It was lucky that I did not fall into precipitous caverns more than once, as there are many here covered over with ferns and fuchsias in such a way as to deceive even the wariest and most experienced travellers. Eventually I got on to the top of the headland and saw Gurnard's Head from a fresh angle. Anything wilder or more majestic than this rock, having storm-laden clouds for its setting, it would be hard to imagine. I then tried to descend to the beach,

but was thwarted again and again by the steepness of the cliffs, until at last I hit upon a narrow, steep path which brought me to a tin shelter, rather like a dug-out in France, filled with lobster pots and nets. I came across no curious sightseers. In fact I only met one stranger the whole day long, and he was a lonely undergraduate clambering about on these very rocks. I now started out to climb the cliff in a deluge and was wet to the skin before ever I reached the top. I hit on the telegraph and followed the homeward path until I came to a farm between Trendrin and Trevega, and, after knocking unsuccessfully at the door for some time, a girl, obviously fresh from an afternoon sleep, clattered down the stairs and laughingly suggested that she would find the woman of the house for me. Having discovered her at the bottom of the garden, this good angel came back and began to talk. She was taking a quiet fortnight's holiday and I accepted an invitation to tea. What a tea that was ! Boiled eggs, unlimited Cornish cream, jam, cakes, pasties—there was no end to the dainties that our hostess spread before us. Five o'clock saw me dropping down the St Ives road once more, and later on I reached my quarters and sat at my window watching across the bay great masses of grey and white clouds setting in a wondrous semicircle in high state on the hills—all Olympus in conclave. The sun was shining on the water and the fishing fleet was preparing to go out for the night—all the beauties of the earth to be had in a moment of time.

The next day I was kept indoors by the wet in the morning, but after lunch it cleared up and I set out over the hills to the heights, with my face set towards

the cromlechs of Trencrom. I had to pick my way carefully over cornfields and stiles until the old dismantled cottages and chimneys, which showed signs of mining activities of ages long past, proved that Halse Town was near. A main road led deeper and deeper down into a densely wooded cleave, where an old mill stopped me for some moments, and then I was directed across some steep fields to the hamlet of Trencrom. Suddenly there broke into my ken a huge cluster of stones on the top of a hill close by, and soon I was standing on the highest peak, with a vista on all sides of incredible beauty. To the south lay the whole blue sweep of Mount's Bay, with Ludgwan Church and St Michael's Mount standing clear-cut as cameos. In the middle distance were innumerable combes intersected with multitudinous golden cornfields, crowned with white-washed cottages dotted here and there in splendid disorderly profusion. To the east lay the Lizard and the backbone of Cornwall, with mines and mine-shafts disfiguring the landscape everywhere. It was more pleasurable to turn north and west, where the open sea of St Ives Bay and the wild moorland of the Land's End district looked inviting to all who cared to use their legs, but inaccessible to all others. Round about hovered rainbow-coloured butterflies of every hue and variety. As is so common and delightful in Cornwall, it was not necessary to return by the same way. I descended through some cornfields which had just been cut and climbed up the hills above Carbis Bay, which so attracted me that I decided to explore the bay itself. It proved to be one of the most delightful places I had yet encountered. For amusement I endeavoured to seek accommodation at all the larger hotels, but at

each I heard the same story—full until the middle or end of September.

On the Friday I caught the ten-twenty-five for Helston. It was almost uncanny to see an airship sailing peacefully over the wild downs. The most noticeable feature of the pretty town is the red stream which runs down the main streets by the side of the pathway. Turning off the main Lizard road and proceeding down a lane which appeared to lead to Gunwalloe, on the right I soon caught sight of Porthleven and the great sandy bar which stretches for so many miles east and west of the road. I saw again, to my great joy, the rocks and caverns overhanging Prussia Cove far away to the west. The road twisted in every direction, now up, now down, like a coy maiden that would not let you know her mind, not being certain of it herself. Without warning I found myself over Helzephron Cove and its hotel by the roadside. Passing over the crest of the hill I came within sight of the six great poles of the Poldhu Wireless Station, where I saw incidentally more wire than I had seen all the rest of the day, and soon afterwards reached the Gunwalloe post office, which is more than a mile from the place of that name. Later on I shaped my course for Mullion Church, which is full of magnificently carved pews. The rock scenery, as I looked back, was grand, bleak and gorgeous, but I had not much time, so perforce missed the Lizard and Kynance, trudging on instead to the main Helston road and then down the St Keverne road, the most winding and contrary natured to be met, towards Ruan Minor. My object was Poltesco. I scarcely know why. It was a whim, nothing more, and the way was difficult to find. However, after inquiring at many farms I did hit upon

a narrow track which led me down to a farm, which I shall never forget, where I ordered tea, and then followed the track, which led, as do so many of these paths, through the farmyard, littered with hens and pigs and dogs and cows, on to the headland above the cove. The attractions of the farm-house did not end with the geraniums and clematis or with the farmyard pets, for the twelve-year-old son Teddy and the pretty daughter Ethel, black-haired and tawny-cheeked, came out to talk to me and entertained me with legend and smile for a golden hour. In the evening I went into the kitchen and helped to bake some Cornish pasties, during which process I was regaled with stories by the family, who afterwards came out *en masse* to wave farewell as I climbed out of the cove on to the eastern cliff, and I inwardly registered a vow to revisit Poltesco at the earliest opportunity—a haven of peace if ever there was one. I was soon tramping over Kennack sands—a weird strip of white sand flanked on either side by great cliffs and rocks. It was a tiring pull to get on to the heights again, and the path was overgrown and hard to find. After five miles or so of rough going I managed again to strike the high ground and the main road, and was soon descending for the last time for the day to the sea. Accommodation for the night at Coverack was hard to find, but at last a house was discovered which had an attic to let, and here three of us were only too glad to sink down. We watched the light die out over the sea and the vessels, big and small, ride over the water, and went to bed after watching an enormous liner pass by ablaze with lights. The Saturday morning saw me watching the sun rise over the sea and the great grey clouds roll back as day wore

on. After breakfast and a talk to the village fishermen I went out and lost my way on Arrowan Common twice before reaching the far-famed St Keverne, with its huge church, the only one possessing a spire which I had so far noticed in the west of Cornwall. The view from the churchyard is one of the finest I have ever seen. All the many creeks round about Falmouth appear for the first time, and I could see east as far as Dodman Head. The church itself is full of interest, being of massive dimensions and containing some very fine old stones. I turned down through the village, guided by the telegraph wires, towards Manaccan, which is only four or five miles away, but owing to the "mazey" nature of the road it seemed to be six or seven. Everywhere the farmers were taking in their corn, and the sound of the reaping machines made a most musical interlude to the monotonous tramping of my feet. Manaccan is beautifully situated at the head of a glen and boasts a church out of which grows a fig-tree. From here I made a detour from Dennis Head by way of St Anthony, one of the most out-of-the-way churches I have come across. As I came out on to the bare downs I was accosted by a coast watcher, who had to go back with me to the Point to see that I did not signal to the enemy, sketch or take photographs. He was a most interesting, well-educated man, who said that he had chosen this spot to settle down for life—"Love in a cottage," he called it—after a life spent in travelling all over the world. He spent his time fishing and shooting and keeping fit. His shelter was made out of the body of an old motor car, which looked altogether too fragile to withstand the storms of winter. He pointed out all the great viewpoints—the Manacles,

Falmouth, St Mawes, Dodman—and I was thankful to think that I had had the sense to come out of my way in order to obtain so perfect a view of scenery as different as possible from that to which I had become accustomed in the other parts of Cornwall. This was much more wooded and less rugged, fuller of creeks and less rocky.

I struck for the Helford river by a short cut of which my friend had told me, and passing Bosigran, the seat of the Vivians, I was soon in what is probably the prettiest village in all Cornwall. I do not quite know for what reasons I allot the palm to Helford. It may be the tiny harbour and creek ; it may be the exquisite gardens to the clustering cottages. Anyway the *tout ensemble* endears itself to me more than Clovelly—I cannot say more. After luncheon I was ferried across the river, in company with a corporal in the D.C.L.I., by a boy of about eighteen, who talked glibly about sights he had seen in Buenos Aires and San Francisco. He was apparently some sort of engineer, full of anecdote, and amused me a good deal. Once on the other side, the corporal told me that he would show me the best route to Falmouth, and he turned out to be an ex-schoolmaster of Manaccan. The road through Maw-nansmith was dull, but shortly after passing through this quaint hamlet he showed me the lane which led down to Bareppa, which he advised me to follow. To my surprise I found myself once more down by the sea, in the presence of immense crowds of people. I passed one cove and climbed the cliffs, from the top of which I got one of the best views obtained during the day. Westward on the horizon rose the spur of St Keverne, in the Manacles rocks. Before me lay the beautiful

city of Falmouth, with its gardens and new picturesque-looking houses. My way from here became more and more congested, until I found myself on the promenade, where all kinds of people jostled one another in endless profusion. After tea I explored the main part of the old town and then caught a train which took me back home to St Ives.

VIII

LYONNESSE

THE younger school of novelists, headed by Hugh Walpole, Charles Marriott and Compton Mackenzie, have all conspired to create an illusion about Cornwall which is simply not true. It has none of the romance, none of the beauty of Devonshire. There is nothing in Cornwall to compare with the rich combes of Exmoor or the wild grandeur of Dartmoor. The cormorant and the sea-gull are its only common birds, as the hydrangea and the fuchsia are its only summer flowers. The palm-tree, which is held up as an example of its profusion in exotic growths, is, like many of its villages and most of its natives, grim, ugly and hostile.

Yet thousands of Londoners flock here every summer, and come back again and again. The reason must be partly lack of initiative, partly because it is a human failing to imagine that the farther one goes, and the more one pays, the wilder and more exquisite the scenery will naturally become, a theory that can be disproved most easily by walking three or four miles through the dingy streets of the mining centres of Pendeena Trewellard, just north of Land's End. They differ in no respect from the colliery districts of Derbyshire and Durham.

The majority of people, however, don't see Cornwall at all. They are momentarily disappointed as they

look out of the train at the grey wretchedness of Redruth and Camborne, but on arrival at St Ives or Penzance they laze in deck-chairs on the sands or promenade, eat unripe plums, glance at the illustrated dailies, and act in precisely the same way as their wiser, more economical friends who have gone down for the day to Southend. The water is slightly more blue in colour, the food is decidedly inferior (butter and eggs are practically unobtainable in Cornwall, the milk is like a weak solution of Reckitt's blue), the air is much more invigorating, trippers are just as prominent, and the shops are unbelievably worse.

Why, then, do visitors throng the West Country? Because it is the fashion of the moment; because we feel a sense of superiority over our fellows on our return home: we have been such a long way. Quite the most exhilarating feature of my holiday in Cornwall has been the notice just outside my door, which I read with never-failing interest each time I pass it: "London 289 miles."

Nevertheless, there is a Cornwall unknown to the golfer, the bather, the tripper, the motorist and the promenader which is worth knowing. The antiquarian is perhaps the only type of visitor who can get behind the scenes, and the antiquarian has to walk. There is a stone circle called the Nine Maidens in the middle of a cornfield near Lamorna; there is a fogou or artificial subterranean passage hidden in untouched bracken at Trewoofe, an ancient holy well near Madron, once upon a time as famous as Lourdes, a British village at Mulfra; and a multitude of quoits, kistvaens, cromlechs, tumuli, logan stones, cairns and stone crosses

that baffle the historian and defy all attempts to account for them.

Surrounded by these, the visitor recalls the legends, superstitions and traditions that the crowded streets of Penzance and St Ives have caused him to forget, and begins to see the long train of Phœnician miners, weighted down with their treasure of tin, descending to the shore from the Ding-dong mine, watches the last desperate stand of the British at Boleigh against the victorious Athelstan, repeoples the hill-tops with the cave and the hut dwellers, and watches the Spanish and French merchant venturers sail into St Mount's Bay to harry and burn the busy ports of Mousehole and Marazion.

One feels that in Devonshire Nature's sway was never seriously threatened by man, and she has dealt kindly with him in return ; while in Cornwall man has snatched her treasures from the dangerous depths of the sea and the bowels of the earth, all-conquering in his anxiety to secure riches, and she has never forgiven him, but sits aloof waiting for a chance to revenge herself. Strange, uncanny accidents occur here ; year by year, Minotaur-like, she exacts her toll of virgins and young men. It is small wonder that the black-haired, dour-faced native scowls at the happy-go-lucky "foreigner" who jests at legends and trifles with the gods. So many of the innocent suffer, so many of the guilty go scot-free.

Yet the Cornishman has no right to grumble ; he is first and foremost a business man, his fish brings him in good money, the mines pay well, and he fleeces the pleasure-seeker with the callousness of the true profiteer. He charges wildly exorbitant fees for uncomfortable

attics, he feeds one monotonously on pilchards, buoys one up with the hope of cream that never appears (oh, for a taste of real yellow, thick Devonshire clotted cream !), he compels the unwary to spend a small fortune in trips in unwieldy motor char-à-bancs to Land's End which is dull, to the Lizard which is ugly, to Falmouth which stinks on one side and is built in imitation of Twickenham on the other.

He extols the artistic beauties of Newlyn and St Ives, which are really suburbs of Billingsgate, and omits to mention the Goonhilly Downs, where the air is as sweet as it is in the Highlands, and white heather grows by the acre ; he discourages visits to Poltesco, Lamorna, Prussia Cove and Cadgwith, where the ancient beauty is still untouched ; he passes under the lee of Trendrine Hill and Hannibal's Cairn without a word of comment in his hurry to deposit you on Gurnard's Head, which is inferior in every way to Beachy Head, while the view from these heights is unsurpassed by anything I know in the United Kingdom ; he invites you to squander money like water at inept carnivals and third-rate regattas, but if you wish to explore the Helford river he will (as likely as not) refuse to ferry you across.

But, after all, you say to yourself : " I'm two hundred and eighty-nine miles away from London ; I get a morning post at seven o'clock and two deliveries a day ; I can read a London paper at breakfast and *The Sunday Times* reaches me earlier here than it does at Sevenoaks. I shall recognise a lot of pictures in next year's Academy, and proudly call attention to the fact that I know every inch of this country ; I know the difference between bass and pollock ; I have seen several adders and not a few hornets, and though the villagers dress as if they

lived in Hammersmith and have no trace at all of that West Country 'burr' that I had been led to expect, though I realise that they are acute commercial traders and are quite as sophisticated as the inhabitants of Surrey, Kent and Middlesex, though I have to send home for meat, fruit and vegetables, yet, after all, I am in Cornwall, the Land of Lyonesse, and I have paid the deuce of a lot of money to get here and to stay here. It must therefore be more romantic, more beautiful, than the home counties. To-morrow I will make yet another effort to see if I can't prove it."

IX

SURREY

“**C**OME down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time,” sings Alfred Noyes, and we should do well to take his advice, both specifically and generally.

Let others, who have more leisure and wealth, prate of Cornish rocks and Scottish moors. We who have but a few hours in which to enjoy the sun, and but few pence to spend on holiday-making, can gain an equally stimulating rest within a few miles of our own doors.

One of the first essentials for a real holiday is change of environment and change of occupation. After months of streets and houses we pine for water and open country.

What water can vie in beauty with the upper reaches of the Thames, what open country compare with the Surrey hills?

Within twenty minutes of Wimbledon we can find furze-clad downs from the top of which we can inhale breezes pure as the naked sea, full of ozone, sweeping straight from the southern coast, uncontaminated, invigorating, calculated to make young men see visions and old men dream dreams.

At one moment you are flying through the slums of South London, at the next you are being whirled through densely wooded rural scenery, a blaze of green and lilac, wisteria and laburnum. Thatched

cottages, mediæval farms, cattle browsing in the meadows or standing knee-deep in the pools, birds singing, ploughboys whistling, all conspire to carry you away to some far-off country where you spent your childhood, and all the burden and grime and turmoil of the great city slips from your shoulders unconsciously.

You wander through leafy lanes, through avenues of limes and chestnuts and poplars, past Georgian mansions and Elizabethan inns, and the scent of sweetbrier and honeysuckle insidiously assails you.

Anon you descend into a shady dell, pine-covered, and discover at the bottom a clear, pellucid pool flanked by rose gardens and white-washed cottages. It is just your best dream come true: you rub your eyes to make sure that you really are awake. The blue smoke curling up from the chimneys, the shades of green varying from the light emerald of the weeds to the almost black of the thick trees behind, the utter loneliness of it, as if it were built by Nature for you and you alone—all these things combine to make the place for ever memorable. And its name? Friday Street. Perfect combination of magic place and magic name. However sore in spirit, however battered about in the conflict of life you are, you will find refection there—and the dwellers in these parts will tell you that Surrey abounds in such places.

But if you are one of those who, unlike Hazlitt, prefer the society of their fellow-men and take delight in honest laughter, you will follow the winding Thames and give yourself up to the unalloyed ecstasy of lying lazily in a punt just watching humanity on holiday.

You need but to take a sixpenny fare from Piccadilly Circus and watch the landscape from the top of a

bus as you are driven past Knightsbridge, Kensington Gardens, Hammersmith and Barnes. Within an hour you will find yourself in Richmond, a watering-place as distinctive in its charms and as different from London as Buxton, Bath, Cheltenham or Harrogate.

You climb the terrace and behold ! at your feet lies the whole valley of the majestic river, a view which Sir Joshua Reynolds declared to be the finest in the land. You mingle with as cosmopolitan a throng as you would see in Singapore, Port Said and San Francisco. You descend to the tow-path and hire a punt and lie up under the lee of some small islet from which you can view the passing pageant with unceasing interest. The beauty of the river girl (never does her sex shine to such advantage as on the river, and well she knows it), the joy of childhood, the calm serenity of old age, wealth in its private motor launch and poverty in coal-black barge, never a second without some new phase, some change in the kaleidoscope. Dull must he be of soul, or out of harmony with nature, who could fail to be interested in the myriad delights of the river. What Long Island is to the New Yorker, so is Eel Pie Island to the Cockney.

Yet it may be that the crowds of Richmond, Hampton Court, Henley or Maidenhead may pall on some temperaments. They have but to punt or row a few hundred yards and lo ! a backwater, lovely in its remoteness, soothing to the senses which revolt at humanity in the mass.

There are no joys to compare with the joy of the river.

It is a quaint characteristic in man commonly to despise those things which are easily accessible and

near at hand: it is this feature in his temperament which leads him to spend vast sums of money and a great deal of time in travelling to remote places for his health. It does him no more good to go to the Northern Fells than to Epsom Downs, and he will derive as great a benefit from the change by the river as by the sea.

The air of London is the best air in the world, but it is liable to become vitiated in the streets. If you would really taste its life-giving properties, go out a dozen miles into the hills and down the river, and if your imagination does not play you false I warrant that you will find that it is as fresh as any breeze you have experienced on Exmoor or in the Highlands.

X

SUNDAY AT RICHMOND

WITH the coming of Saturday noontide most Londoners heave a sigh of relief; for the next two score hours or so work may be forgotten and a blessed leisure indulged in, matinées enjoyed and a hilarious dinner at the "Troc," to the accompaniment of loud and cheery music and the popping of corks and the busy hum of conversation.

Sunday dawns and there is no hurried breakfast and a rush for "Tubes," but a protracted, sociable meal, followed by a long smoke and the steady perusal of the paper, with perhaps a visit to church at the comfortable hour of eleven. On a fine, sunny morning the call of nature is too insistent to permit of our remaining indoors, and we flock to the park to join the procession of perambulators and of those who like to listen to the band and gloat over the freshness of the trees.

But London proper does not really rouse itself on Sunday until after lunch. The only travellers by the Underground in the pre-lunch hours carry Prayer Books in their hands; the streets are full of cars carrying lucky men and women Surreywards and riverwards for the day. But these represent but a minute fraction of the population. For the most part, the pavements are deserted until two o'clock, then the buses and trains begin to fill, and all London hastens to snatch a glimpse of the country, a breath of pure air.

Kew Gardens attract the lovers of flowers, but the river-side draws the largest crowds. Hampton Court, Kingston, Weybridge, Maidenhead—every nook and cranny of the reaches of the Thames are crammed with overworked men and women on pleasure bent, but most popular of all stands Richmond.

And little wonder ! For sixpence you may mount to the top of a bus in Piccadilly, ride at your ease past Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, drinking in the fresh breeze blowing up from the west, wonder at the gaudy grandeur of Hammersmith Bridge and scent the rich common lands of Surrey on Barnes Common, and after an hour's run find yourself transplanted into a watering-place which for sheer beauty and charm leaves Buxton and Harrogate, Bath or Droitwich, hopelessly behind.

Richmond lays itself out to attract the jaded and the tired and to restore the overstrained body. It has comfortable hotels in plenty facing the sweeping stretch of the Thames, and the whole beautiful valley of the Garden of England to please the eyes of those who can afford to spend their week-ends there ; it has cinemas, delectable, cheap shops and theatres for those who pine for London delights when away from the stress and turmoil of their noisy homes ; it has a park as wild as the New Forest, where fallow deer disport themselves and equestrians may gallop far from the madding crowd.

It has gardens and terraces where loving couples may spoon and have tea under the shelter of the trees, with a view which has had as many fervent admirers as any in England. The lover of humanity may mix with the most cosmopolitan crowd that is to be

found in the country. No man is so rich that he can afford to neglect the delights which she has to offer ; few are too poor to be able to afford the time and money necessary to reach this delectable resort.

On the tow-path and the upper road promenade every Sunday myriads of human beings of every sort : wounded Colonials, who have a vast hospital in the park, gorgeously attired flappers, with their immaculately clad "boys," staid old couples, gay young spinsters and bachelors, subalterns and generals, able-bodied seamen and admirals, mendicants and millionaires, Public School boys and street arabs, parsons and actresses, novelists and stockbrokers, successful men of business and down-at-heel Rowton House lodgers.

To all, irrespective of sex, religion, wealth or nationality, Richmond opens her all-embracing arms, spreading her bounteous gifts to everyone who has eyes to see or spirit to appreciate her beauty. To the man or woman who is interested in humanity no place provides such "copy" as a seat on the river-bank. He or she may watch the prosperous in their private steam launches or motor punt glide leisurely by ; the gay shopgirl, lightly and delicately clad, attended by her swain in khaki or blue, punt or row to some hidden mooring under the trees, far from prying eyes, where she may listen rapt to the old, old story which never loses its fresh glory, however often told. Fair maiden and warrior lover live their golden hour a million miles away beneath the scented trees, to the tune of the flowing river and the soothing splash of passing oars.

There are many to whom the name of Richmond brings sweeter memories and the promise of fairer

things than any islands of the Hesperides did to great lovers of long ago.

Cheery, raucous errand-boys sweep past in a coal-black, dirty barge; staunch-hearted nurses row valiantly against the stream with a full crew of incapacitated warriors in the stern; the flannelled fool languidly and with superb insouciance gives an exhibition in the complete art of punting; gleeful children whistle and sing to the accompaniment of a gramophone; bowler-hatted grandfathers, and grandmothers decked out in bonnet and shawl, commit themselves nervously to the mercy of the swiftly flowing waters, imploring Alice and John not to launch out too far from the bank; cargoes of timber and coal from Brentford are towed down-stream in ugly tugs, with brawny Amazons at the helm and Lilliputian captains at the wheel.

Small urchins raise their voices to heaven from the shore, urging the passers-by to indulge in a Sunday paper or a packet of chocolates; fair ladies whose bright eyes have entangled the young men's fancies in the net of love tread daintily into the cushioned bottoms of dinghies, skiffs and punts, preparatory to hours of mirth and idleness and a surfeit of appetising dishes and goodly cheer; whole families joyfully embark for Eel Pie Island and Hampton Court, jerseys are discarded, parasols raised, the sun reigns aloft, supreme lord of the heavens; and the boatmen, sweating and overworked, wish that it were always Sunday and always warm. Peace descends on all mankind. Books and writing-pads cease to attract, and everyone spends his day in gazing at and commenting upon the other river-lovers.

So insidious is the attraction of the Thames that no

one can resist the temptation just to drink in its ever-changing beauties. Ordinary homely folk once, they give themselves up to its delights, take on a romantic setting, and are for ever lovely and for ever fair.

All too fast the happy hours fly past, and we begin reluctantly to think of tea and home. The shadows of evening descend and the narrow mediæval streets of Richmond fill again. Countless tea-houses, cosy corners, pagodas and the like emit a constant stream of holiday-making humanity hurrying to catch bus and Tube and car.

Tired but ineffably happy, countless couples doze away in listless content as they are whirled home once more, and gradually quietness pervades the river and the streets; and all is still once more, save for the occasional laugh heard in an upper window and the whir of a belated motor bicycle or car. All London is asleep save the ever-watchful sentinels of the night, and dreamless slumbers prepare the body for the beginning of a new week of turmoil and labour.

XI

OXFORD IN RETROSPECT

THE reading of *Sinister Street*, Volume II., first set me dreaming and then thinking.

After finishing the third book, "Dreaming Spires," late at night, I found myself dreaming that I was back in Oxford in the Blues' changing-room on the Iffley Road ground. This sacred, immaculately kept apartment was crowded with Belgian refugees, to whom I displayed my name in a gorgeously bound volume entitled *Members of Vincent's*. None of them seemed to display the right amount of awe at the mention of this august club, nor were any of them perturbed or dismayed, as I was, by reading my name uninitialed, as if I were a professional cricketer, with the cryptic utterance in brackets after it: "God knows why!"

This dream in epitome seems to sum up Oxford to me, the love of correct ceremonial combined with a sense of one's own unworthiness to partake in the ceremony or to mix with the gods of yester year.

I think Oxford as I knew it five years ago is already a thing of the past. After the war it will have changed in many ways, and for this reason if for no other I have thought it worth while to cast my mind back over the fast-slipping years and collect what random memories I have left before I altogether forget them.

In the first place I went up late.

At eighteen I left school, with no prospect of ever going to either university ; at twenty, after two years' hard work in London, the chance came, and after a struggle with "Smalls" which only just resulted in my defeating the examiners I was entered as a Commoner of "The House."

My pride when I first saw my name printed in staring white letters with full initials and the prefix "Mr" over the door of my rooms in "Canterbury" was unbounded.

Full of zeal, I searched all the likely and unlikely shops for pictures, bric-à-brac, bookcases, flowers, in pots and without, revolving bookcases, tablecloths, etc., with which to make the rooms worthy of the majestic beauty of the white-washed name.

It was entirely owing to the good advice of my scout that I did not waste more money than I did. In fact more and more was it borne in on me as time went on that the tradition of Oxford is never to let anyone know when, where, why or how a thing is to be done. Were it not for the scouts, chapels would be unvisited, dons ignored, lectures "cut," gowns unheard of—the corporate life of the University would cease altogether ; both mentally and physically the undergraduate population would starve. Small wonder is it, then, that scouts flourish and retire on what they modestly call a competence, but what old Indian civilians would call an immoderately large pension.

I was of a particularly nervous temperament and ever afraid of doing the wrong thing inadvertently, a gross disease, for owing to it I missed half the charm and joy which Oxford had provided for me. I did so mean, too, to enjoy to the full my four fat

years, knowing how many lean ones would succeed to them.

As I did not come from Eton or Westminster, I found myself alone among the freshmen, "messaging" with seven others representing seven different schools, all far better known than my own. This alone served to intensify my sensitiveness and loneliness, and I used nightly to shrink away from the others, from a sense of shame. I had so little in common with these other men and yet I longed to be of them. This feeling has not entirely died away even yet. Even now, when I have recognised that there is nothing in the Carthusian or Wykehamist so unapproachable, so god-like, that he should be separated from less well-favoured men, I shrink at his approach.

After dinner every night I looked longingly after the string of great men who would wander slackly or chase each other strenuously across the sacred grass of "Tom Quad" towards the junior common room, where they would unbend over coffee and dessert even towards the freshmen who ventured within the dread portals. I for one could never screw up courage to enter for a full two terms, although I paid a special subscription towards it, so afraid was I of being thought "uppish," afraid of doing the wrong thing.

Looking back on it now, it seems to me that it would have been an easy thing to live in Oxford for four years, or for ever, and yet not be of it at all. The merest accident seemed to make you one in that freemasonry, and the merest accident could keep you outside in the cold all your days.

My accident was an athletic one. I was asked to play rugger. I accepted, and played very badly.

But luckily for me the football of the moment was bad, so I was included in the side whenever they could get no one else. A few of the XV. called on me. Two, to be precise. No one else out of the entire three hundred undergraduates troubled about me in the slightest degree, least of all those on my own staircase.

This I know is not the case at other colleges, but other colleges have not the prefix "Mr" over their doors. You cannot have it every way.

We carried our aloofness to our neighbour to an extreme.

It meant that the whole college was composed of innumerable small cliques. But what we lost in a general sense of camaraderie and bonhomous good-fellowship we made up in lifelong friendship with the few. True, we did not by any means know all the men of our own year, as other men in other colleges apparently did, but those friends we had "and their adoption tried," we had every chance of grappling to our hearts with hoops of steel.

To begin with—we called it for the sake of economy, but we all knew it was the outcome of an intense loneliness (no place can be so lonely as Oxford)—we clubbed together in "twos" and "threes" for breakfast and lunch. For tea we went to Buol's or Lloyd's in "The Corn" in batches of threes and fours. Even after dinner we could not work alone, but made a pretence of doing each other mutual benefits by working in parties. This after-dinner work, by the way, was with us for our first two years pure farce.

There was always so much to be said if we were not alone, whereas if we were, the latest number of *Cornhill*, or a new novel fresh from Slatter & Rose or

Gadney, always claimed the prior place before the dead bones of mathematics or the absurdities of "Pass Mods." As a matter of fact, Oxford is a wonderful place for reading the books that are not required for examination. I suppose most men gained whatever love for literature they have from browsing night after night in Blackwell's, Thornton's, Parker's or Gadney's.

Every kind of book man could desire was not only in stock, but displayed invitingly, imploring your perusal, on the myriad counters which these shops seemed to own.

Every new edition, whether "de luxe" or "popular," of all the great masters stood by your side silently beseeching you to scan its pages now that you were there. "I must have this, I must have this," soon became the sing-song of your mind as more and more treasures stood revealed, as you turned over page after page of delectable manuscript.

I wonder more has not been made of this essential feature of Oxford life. Every autumn or early spring afternoon between five o'clock and seven, or on rainy days, all the time between lunch and dinner, no bookshop is empty for an instant. No ostentatious attendant guards you to see that you buy; you are encouraged to choose for yourself, and be long in choosing; in fact you are not necessarily expected to buy at all. Day after day you could see men simply using these shops as a sort of public library, definitely settling down in seats to read fresh essays of Chesterton or plays of Shaw. Every type of man congregated there in the wet—rugger and rowing Blues, strange, long-haired, sedentary men who never appeared elsewhere, vacuous, tailor-made, "would-be bloods," who looked

as if they never read anything, conscious imitators of the Pre-Raphaelites, successful in their imitation only sartorially, even the hunting men on the look-out for Jorrocks and Mr Sponge. It was a strange medley, not to be met with elsewhere. They would vanish in the darkness of the night to the Olympic heights of Vincent's, the more genial glow of the "Grid," to expensive rooms in "The High" or "K.E." Street, or to back streets and dingy rooms down "Worcester" way.

The book-shops were by far the most interesting in Oxford, but all were enticing. Extraneous aids in the way of more than ordinarily pretty girls to serve rather than any display of goods to be bought caused some shops to be thronged from morning till night, while others were sure of a continuous flow of customers by reason of the necessity of buying—such were the tailors, tobacconists, wine merchants and sports depots in the "High," "Corn" and "Broad."

There seems always to have been a particular sort of man who spent all his leisure time in patrolling the streets aimlessly, whose exercise consisted in passing from the doors of one shop to those of the next; and indeed this is not a matter for wonder, for few indeed and lucky above measure were those who had found a niche in the athletic world where they were wanted. Out of a college of three hundred a few, say thirty, rowed, thirty managed to secure a game of football of some kind during the week, another dozen (roughly) were likely to get some hockey, a few played golf and lacrosse, and five or six ran seriously on the track. The remainder were left entirely to their own devices. If they were rich, of course there was hunting; other-

wise nothing remained but to walk, an occupation to which undergraduates, taken as a whole, are not given.

We were more fortunate than some colleges in that it was possible to run with the beagles three days a week. About sixty sportsmen availed themselves of this, one of the finest sports of the day, and of these ninety per cent. were Etonians.

That they might have joined the University Athletic Club or the Hare and Hounds' Club never seemed to strike the outcasts. Exercise in Oxford is absolutely essential to anyone who wishes to keep at all healthy: the town lies so low that the incessant fogs and damp ruin the mind and body of any Public School men who become ensnared by the enervating atmosphere of the town and do not make any efforts to rouse themselves from the lethargy which the air so subtly induces.

Men won't join the running clubs because they fear public opinion: they dislike intensely having to mix freely with undergraduates from colleges other than their own; the mere fact that they have to change in the same room with them causes a sensitive shrinking and an aversion from the place. Hence the slur that naturally seems to be cast on the shoulders of all who run—"It isn't done"; so men willingly forgo all exercise for a mere prejudice, an imagined losing of caste.

My own case, as I pointed out, was fortunate: I was included, quite often, in my college rugby team, and I was ever a wild lover of beagling, so I was provided for every way, but that, as can be seen at once, was a fluke.

Many of my dearest friends, lovers of exercise, but not brilliant exponents of any game, were destined to

spend their slack hours in solitary walks, or in strolling round the town—a futile pursuit.

To the “House” beagles I owe my happiest memories.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays the “drag” would draw up at Canterbury Gate at one-fifteen, and after much cracking of whips and blowing of horns we would rattle down the High amid the blare of the trumpet and the clatter of hoofs over Magdalen Bridge and away for the open country. A five, ten or sometimes fifteen mile drive would bring us to the meet. Then for a strenuous three hours’ hunt, tearing of clothes over barbed wire and hedges, losing of breath and of one’s fellows over the stiff upland plough, chilly waits after a perspiring effort to catch up, the gradual getting of a second wind and the tiring of the poor, hunted hare; in with prodigious luck at a death, perhaps even, amid blushes, the recipient of a pad to be treasured for ever as something beyond calculable price; and then followed the trudge over many fields, dog-tired, muddy, weary but very happy, to a gigantic tea at a farm or public-house, and then the dreamy content of the long drive back in the dim evening light as each glorious manifestation of autumn’s quickly departing beauty would strike another and yet another echoing chord of appreciative joy in the heart, Magdalen Bridge once more, the lights and human companionship of the High, more “toot-tooting” of the horn and answering “yoicks” from friends on the pavement, a stiff crawl out of the drag into the wondrous ecstasy of a hot bath, and then “Hall” and—who would do any work after such an afternoon as this? “Coming round after?” “Right-o!” . . . and a retelling of

all the accidents by flood and field of the afternoon until the small hours, and so to blissful sleep.

It is these days on which I find myself looking back with most regret now that the years are closing round me ; more and more I forget the episodes I then thought all-important, clearer and clearer defined in my mind are those record runs with the fastest pack of its day, the friendships made in the open country of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, the heart-breaking bursts not to disgrace oneself in the efforts to keep up, the dreams in the darkness as we rattled home on those winter nights.

Only second to beagling, and not far behind it, I reckon my days spent, clad in far lighter garb than in the real chase, in hunting paper over Headington Hill with the Hare and Hounds. Every Wednesday and Saturday in my second and succeeding years I could be seen endeavouring, not to catch an elusive, crafty hare, but to outrun a more solid human opponent from South London or Derby, doughty, well-trained, skilled athletes—far different from and a far more distressing pursuit than beagling, but hardly less enjoyable and just as prone to lead up to more stirring tales of “derring-do” in cosy rooms between “after-supper and bedtime.”

Of all exercises open to the whole University that of cross-country running is infinitely the best ; it is the cheapest, it exerts a man to the uttermost, it teaches him how possible it is to continue running with his will alone, when the flesh has given out ; in other words, it teaches him endurance and self-reliance more than any game, it keeps him healthy, it gives him that sense of rivalry and competition which seems to be necessary

to nearly every sport except hunting; further, it holds out to him the chance that every healthy undergraduate desires above all—the chance of representing his University against Cambridge, of getting his Blue.

Track-running, though not so engrossing in practice, can be just as exhilarating and madly exciting when sports are held, and has the added advantage that it is possible to get more exercise in a very little time by running on a track than by any other form of exercise.

It was possible both to take needful exercise and to watch the University XV. play Blackheath, the London Scottish or any other side that happened to be visiting the town. With most people the watching of these matches (and they were very largely attended) meant the giving up of any form of exercise for that day.

Sundays in Oxford were a trial until we discovered a way out.

The usual thing was to rise in time for morning chapel, have a colossal lunch from one to three-thirty, walk off the soporific effects induced thereby in the parks, the home of peripatetic dons and nursemaids, and roll home to tea and evening chapel—a profitless day.

After coming into collision with Authority we endeavoured to leave Oxford every Sunday and tramp the country-side.

At two minutes to ten we might be seen running for our lives down past the prison to catch the ten o'clock train to Didcot. Arrived there, we would walk up towards the ever-beckoning Downs and stop perhaps for half-an-hour at some old church to hear a psalm and lesson, to the great wonderment of the sprinkling of villagers lost in the dim recesses of the huge Norman building. Out in the fresh air, we would shake ourselves

and hurry over the bare white road leading on to the Icknield Way and arrive at the Green Boar, Wantage, just in time for lunch; after which we would take the mystic path that led through the heart of the Downs, Sarumwards, and after an hour's stiff climb almost persuade ourselves that we were on the Plain itself, so bare and undulating were the hills, so desolate and solitary, except for the tinkle of the sheep-bells and the sighing of the wind in the few wan, weather-beaten trees that crest the various knolls.

Humanity seemed to be left behind for ever until we saw far away in the wooded valley below the white smoke of the diminutive express, like a train in Lilliput, rise in curly waves in the blue air. It reminded us exactly of some old mythological dragon snorting forth its war-like fumes as it wriggled on its path of devastation and murder. Here only, we felt, could Kenneth Grahame have thought out his *Dream Days*; here it must have been that Jude the Obscure looked with longing into the mists, vainly hoping to descry his fair city of learning.

Sometimes we brought our food with us and sitting with shepherds or gipsies on the green Roman way would compare our lot with that of the "heavy luncher" in college. By tea-time we would reach our westernmost spot, the White Horse Hill and Wayland Smith's Cave, and gazing longingly at the land of desire beyond the setting sun, would reluctantly turn our backs and race down over the white chalk body of the horse to Uffington village for tea, followed by Evensong at the octagonal-towered church, afterwards catching the last train back to Oxford, accompanied by soldiers and other townsmen whose real home was

on these Berkshire downs. Back at Oxford, we had to run the gauntlet of being "progged" for being out without a gown, as if we should go toga-clad on the Icknield Way, and, famished, sit down to a luxurious supper late at night after a twelve hours' absence from Oxford.

These Sundays made me love Oxford as I should never otherwise have done. To come back to her after a day of magic beauty, exploring the Evenlode and Windrush (what inimitable names these are !), or the heights of Edghill, or the recesses of Compton Wynyates, or the Cotswold hamlets of Upper Swell, Slaughter and Ebrington, was to return doubly filled with a sense of beauty, for the remembered beauty of meadow, hill and stream reacted on the beauty of the spires and mediæval buildings; each called up memories of the other, so that familiarity did not breed that blindness to their majesty as it would have had we never left the cloistered precincts of our own college.

What strange adventures, what strange companions, what unexpected charms did we not encounter on these Sabbatical wanderings. Church and tavern, river-side and wood each provided some fresh surprise, each awoke some latent echo in the mind, each evoked a response from our slowly growing æsthetic sense of appreciation.

Even if we only went so far afield as Cumnor and thought on *The Scholar-Gipsy* and Amy Robsart, or to Beckley, visualising *Cripps the Carrier*, or to Water Orton, or to Great Tew, to live over again the great days of Falkland, we gained something.

The much-visited Woodstock even roused us to a spiritual realisation of some of Wordsworth's phil-

osophy ; wherever we went, far or near, we came back with a fuller sense of appreciation, our outlook widened, our education a little more complete ; whereas, had we slacked about in punt or canoe or trailed round Mesopotamia with the herd of others, we should have discussed the everlasting trivialities—gossip, scandal, games.

Not least did we learn what Oxford had to teach when we were farthest from her, at the Four Shire Stone of Worcester, Gloucester, Warwick and Oxford, near Moreton-in-the-Marsh, or Burford, or Lechlade, or Islip.

Incidentally during the week there were essays to be written, lectures to be attended, tutors to be interviewed.

At first we were assiduous, dutiful takers of notes, but very soon, in mathematics at any rate, we realised the futility of this means of education and absented ourselves on the slightest of pretexts. These lectures seemed to degenerate so often into freehand-drawing practices : each man would disfigure his foolscap or notebook with egregious gargoyles, supposed likenesses of the lecturer or fellow-sufferers. Only in my third and fourth years did I meet men and girls who took notes which came in useful ; and even then I found it extraordinarily hard to make sense of what I had written when I tried to get them up for my “ Finals.” To listen to the rhapsodies of a professor of English literature was one thing—and a very great thing—but to take down intelligible scraps of what he said, another. The result was too often ludicrous.

Examinations themselves had no terrors for me. I would gladly spend hours in the schools, even when I

knew (as happened twice) that a Third Class was all that I could reasonably hope for.

Somehow it pleased me to think that I was expected to unburden myself on paper of all that I even pretended to know. The Bodleian and Radcliffe Camera were thrown open to us to work in, to borrow books from; but often as I used to avail myself of these privileges, the scarcity of books, or rather the difficulty of finding them on the part of the boys hired for that purpose, hindered rather than helped me in my work.

And indeed these libraries are not ideal places to concentrate one's thoughts in; they are cold, dusty, full of men who look dirty and unwashed, furtive, craven.

Probably in the light of day they were as we were, normal human beings, but looked at in the dim light that always took the place of daylight in the Camera (and one found oneself for ever inspecting them instead of working) they reminded us of those frequenters of public libraries in large towns, germ-ridden, horrible tramps in appearance but not half so interesting.

After an hour or so of this torture the thoughts of a cosy fire in one's own rooms proved too strong; we would buy the required book, for which we had been kept waiting so long, and hurriedly rush into the open air and to Gadney's shop, where another hour would be spent in turning over books quite different from that which we had come to purchase, and then would stroll home with new purchases, and, with feet on mantelpiece, in arm-chair before the fire would settle down to a third hour of bliss ("It's too late to do any work now," being our sop to our conscience). Small wonder we took Third and Fourth classes.

Our amusements were chiefly provided for us by the theatre, which we frequented not less than once a week.

Starting by becoming habitués of the stalls for one term, for three and a half years afterwards we might be seen, the regular pit-goers, uncritical, jovial, prepared to be pleased with whatever fare the gods provided. A musical comedy would exercise our voices, for we would join in every song which we knew and many that we did not. Gilbert and Sullivan alone was treated with respect. Every year the same crowds surged early to the doors for their old, never-old favourites. The Irish Players, who came first to the Corn Exchange in 1906 and were quite unrecognised now share an equal popularity, I am told, and the Modern Drama is listened to attentively by crowded houses.

In my day the theatre would have only been half full, the ordinary patrons showing their disgust by transferring their attentions for the week to that unlawful East Oxford Theatre, the very name of which seems to undergo a change terminally. Here stallholders, amid the mingled applause and hisses of the gallery, who wished to see the convict come to his own again, the villain stabbed, would mount the stage at the tensest moment of the drama by a leap over the orchestral conductor's head.

This theatre was the very home of "raggers." Fights Week and "Toggers," November the Fifth and other gala occasions woke up the whole town to throw siphons and "bombs" along the street and invite the police to individual combat, but the "Empire" had no rest except in vacation, and then it commonly had to close down.

Club life plays a large part in the undergraduate's

life from the moment when as a freshman he forms one of his own, piqued at being left out in the cold, to that proud moment when he finds himself elected to Vincent's, that home of Titans where gods indulge in free beer and have their letters stamped for them free.

Most men new to Oxford gladly pay their ten guineas and become life members of the Union, who emulate Vincent's in stamping their members' letters, but unless they wish to become orators they will find their money wasted, for strange and sad to look upon are the members of the Union.

A more frequented, more really social club is the O.U.D.S., by no means confined to those whose taste in drama is developed beyond their fellows, but a cosy, London-like club, where it is possible to meet cheery companions and dine both cheaply and well. The same advantages are to be found in the "Grid," chiefly composed of Trinity, "Univ." and Oriel men. "The Bullingdon" and "Loder's" attract sportsmen possessed of more than £10,000 a year, and there are innumerable political and literary, musical and drinking clubs, both college and open to the university.

There is scarcely a taste that is not catered for, from the most vacuous to the most learned, and it is by no means the least characteristic feature of Oxford life that so many clubs should exist, and not only exist, but flourish.

These clubs did more to mould our characters than we are inclined to allow. Before election how feckless and isolated we were inclined to feel. The banging of the great gates and booming of "Great Tom" as a sign that we were not allowed to leave the college after nine-twenty P.M. made me in early days fretful

and gloomy. I felt a prisoner, longing to escape, and found myself wandering aimlessly about the streets, stopping to listen to the town band at street corners, "corn-stalking," as it was called, like Fra Lippo Lippi, in common with hundreds of other lonely men of my age, driven to the lighted streets and crowd of townees for my amusement.

Not until my last years did I see the folly of these wasted nights, and I am inclined to blame my contemporaries' lack of conviviality for much of this pointless wandering that occupies the time of so many men who have been forced, like myself, to find consolation in vulgarity.

It was only just when I was about to leave Oxford for ever that I was made a member of those clubs which might have meant so much to me, or was invited as a guest of honour to those others where I made such sterling friendships.

Oxford's spires, its hopes and aspirations begin to fade: the early morning training walk through meadows, the bathes at Long Bridges, Parson's Pleasure and Sandford Lasher, the formal calls on the marriageable daughters of North Oxford, the "grinds" and pageants, varsity sermons at St Mary's and Balliol, concerts, bump suppers and bonfires, St Giles's Fair and the Cowley Fathers, the crawling horse-trams and the flying hansoms are all things of the past, episodes in another life, and scattered to the four quarters of the globe are our friends, reunited, if ever, only for those brief but glorious hours at Queen's Club ¹ in the December fog for the "rugger" match, or Lord's for the cricket.

Oxford is now a training camp and a hospital: the

¹ Now Twickenham.

gown has given place to khaki and a phase of her existence is over. Never again is she likely to become quite what she was when we knew her five short years ago. War leaves an indelible mark on a nation's character, and not least on those places where that character is to be formed for good or ill.

XII

OXFORD IN WAR-TIME

DIMLY I remember to have heard of torrential rains and rising waters in the Oxford area before I left my remote corner of Cornwall, whither the doctors had sent me to recover. But those whose faces are peeling in the sun, whose hands are daily becoming more and more freckled, have little thought for or belief in places where a steady down-pouring continues for several days. It was early morning at Didcot when I woke to the fact that the rain had come to stay. It is so many years since I went down that I had even forgotten how many stations lay between us and the city of spires. I looked longingly out of the window over the sodden land, flashes of memory flickering across my mind of a kill in this field with the House beagles, a cross-country run over that height with the O.U.H. and H. It was looking back on a golden age when the most terrible thing that could happen to man was to belong to a college which had been bumped for four consecutive nights in "Eights," when the summit of all our earthly ambitions was to wear a simple, inconspicuous dark blue blazer with a mystic white sign on the pocket, when conversations ran solely on athletic prowess, and adulation and worship were reserved for the physically successful.

A tiny stream running parallel with the railway line arrested my attention for a moment. Could this

be ? Impossible. No. Yes. This, this insignificant meadow brook, was the mighty Thames, which I had never ceased to regard as the proudest river in the world. It was a rude awakening, a prelude to further shocks. The station seemed smaller and dirtier than usual. I refused the assistance of out-porters and lugged my suit-case towards the terminus of the horse-trams. There was always one waiting. And now I have to tell of a psychic phenomenon which only Sir Oliver Lodge could pretend to unravel. There were *no* tram-lines, but the tram *was* there, waiting as usual, for the fiftieth part of a second. I would swear to this in any court of law. It was actually there . . . and then suddenly, mysteriously, it wasn't. Instead there was a sign : " Buses stop by request." Buses ? I had not long to wait for the solution to this puzzle. A strange species of motor bus loomed into view. But no, I could not bring myself to enter Oxford that way. I preferred to walk in the soaking rain : that walk past Cooper's marmalade factory and the prison seemed to have altered not at all ; it was as tedious and as long as ever. But it was when I reached Carfax that I realised that the Oxford that I had known had disappeared altogether, whether permanently or no lies in the lap of the gods.

Crowds of khaki-clad boys stood chattering or moving quickly across the four cross-roads. There seemed to be incessant traffic. The pavements were as crowded as Oxford Street on Saturday morning. I turned down St Aldate's to Christ Church and found to my delight at last a face I knew—the porter at the gate. I wandered off to find my rooms, wondering at the diminutive beauties of Tom Quad : never before had I

guessed how beautiful it was—or how small. Groups of R.F.C. cadets stood in doorways where the giants of old had cracked whips, discussed philosophy, formulated theories of empire-building—giants, alas ! now all dead, save one or two diseased like myself.

The rooms I was to use were furnished with that careless splendour, that strange mixture of execrable and excellent taste, which is so characteristic a feature of the wealthy undergraduate possessed of æsthetic possibilities. I envied him his books. Here at any rate he would learn to know in four years to appreciate the subtle and permanent appeal of truth and beauty. I turned over some rare editions and sank down in an easy-chair (no chairs in the world are quite so “easy” as these, hallowed with age, to be found in all undergraduates’ rooms) : in a moment I was lost to the world. When I rose I noticed what had always escaped me of old, that the whole setting was markedly incongruous. No woman would be content to live in such a room for five minutes. The paint on the doors was dirty and scratched, the wall-paper discoloured. Money had been lavished on odious oil-paintings and heavy oak bureaus, but nothing had been done to ensure a colour-effect to please the eye ; there was none of that “spick-and-span” effect that a woman would have demanded had the room been hers. I suddenly felt old and dreary, in need of companionship. I went out into the streets, diving here and there into a much-loved shop, to see if the same kindly faces which had smiled tolerantly on my callow brusquerie as an undergraduate were still to be found. For the most part they were, and the morning was spent in indulging in delightful reminiscences of forgotten “episodes,” of “Fifths,” and “rags,” and

friends, and games. I heard of Oxford's new-found prosperity, of cash payment instead of bad debts, of dons once rooted to a cloister now like city merchants, travelling Londonwards every day to lend their brains to their country in munitions, the War Office, the Admiralty and other Government departments.

At last the time arrived for me to do that for which I had come. I was back in the Sheldonian for the first time since I had taken my degree. I was confronting a large audience of enthusiasts who had come, in the middle of a great war, to endeavour to learn to play their part adequately in the great reconstructive area which must now be prepared for.

Tired with my effort to bring home my particular gospel, I sought refuge in the college J.C.R., and found that I was back in an officers' mess. Instead of a horde of shouting, undisciplined undergraduates, I found a bevy of quiet officers with eyes that spoke of strain and a deadly seriousness of purpose. The talk was low, as between men holding responsible positions, not the chatter of schoolboys, but the sober conversation of grown men—and yet how little difference in actual years between these officers of to-day and the sportsmen of 1913.

But it was not until evening that I at last realised quite what it was that had been puzzling me all day. Somehow I resented the presence of these boys in the sacrosanct rooms where the shades of Ruskin, Gladstone and thousands of the world's great men had lived. How could one expect these cadets to realise the glory that was "Tom" and the grandeur that was "Peck"?

Suddenly, from all doors of the quadrangle issued

forth hundreds of these youths, with hair sleek, their bearing alert and upright, their uniforms and general appearance spotless. In a few moments they had fallen in, the roll was called and the sergeant-major was occupied in his masterly task of kindly terrorisation. I recommend this phrase to the Prussians, who would work psychology by rule of thumb. Officers appeared, a staff officer, commands were given and the whole body moved off in fours to dine. What a transformation in three short years ! Instead of resenting the presence of these men in hallowed ground I suddenly understood. I was proud that the flower of England should use these buildings. Not less than Ruskin's and Gladstone's will their shades haunt these college buildings for ever. They have passed a stiffer matriculation than ever we of the old school did ; they are preparing to take a degree which leaves the Mastership of Arts as a very poor, colourless thing. They will not live, most of them, to secure material comforts, an honoured old age, worldly honours ; but they will have learnt the lesson of life which some of us fail to learn in seventy years in as many months or even days. They will leave behind them a heritage to the University which is proud to have possessed them, undying, magnificent.

Men wonder, we all wonder, where the old Oxford that we knew has disappeared. We wonder, some of us with quaking in our hearts, what sort of Oxford the next generation will see. We need not quake. There were traditions that were without price gone never to return ; in spite of terrible shortcomings Oxford was still the best university in the world, but the Oxford of the future, by reason of those cadets now in it, will be still

finer. Their influence will permeate the very walls ; the sense of discipline, of sobriety, of the great opportunities which life has to offer will never leave it. There will be no sliding back into an "ancien régime" : reconstruction will not mean a clean sweep : built upon all that was excellent in the old, will be an even firmer foundation of all that is excellent (and how much there is of that most of us will never know) in the new.

I entered the city which I love more than any in the world with grave misgivings. I left it, serenely happy, convinced that her gain is already incalculable, that her future is assured, that she will lead the new world on to the path of peace and happiness better than she led in the past. Instead of the insidious vices of extravagance, snobbery, intellectual apathy, narrowness of aim and outlook, and so on, there will be widened opportunity, the open door, a renascence of learning, breadth of view, and a seriousness of purpose which will send all her members out into the world masters of the arts that really matter, those of citizenship, so that all the world may benefit from the practical idealism of all those who learn their lesson in a city which will never more be called the home of lost causes.

XIII

OXFORD REVISITED, 1922

THIS is an article written with a purpose. I would have all graduates return as I returned last week-end, just *thus* . . . to induce a becoming humility.

Callow as only a man can be after long absence, I expected the college porters to remember me. They did . . . very nearly: their "You don't look it, sir," was a shade too quick to be spontaneous. It is no use: I have been down thirteen years: I don't believe that I have changed—I haven't except in face, and there was one nearer than the college porter and dearer than my scout (as Stephen Leacock would say) who recognised me as I turned into the George Café. It says much for the lesson that I had just learnt at the porter's lodge that I was able to say quickly: "*You* . . . oh, my dear . . . you haven't changed a scrap" . . . but (as we say in London) "it is the woman who pays." The ravages of time and all that. When we met again later that night at the Masonic Hall my programme was full—my oldest partner was born on the day that I passed "Smalls." In London I am sometimes described as modern—young. A Whitsun week-end in Oxford has made me realise that to be thirty-six is to be in one's dotage.

And yet I have discovered something. Oxford does not change—I do not change. There is no Oxford.

The Oxford that you see does not exist for me. The Oxford that existed for me in 1909 is exactly the same. "Know you her secret none can utter?" I do—it is to make a man realise his limitations. I am, they say, a writer without a soul—of incredible vulgarity. I stood in front of Magdalen Tower for nearly an hour. It left me quite cold. I admire it—I do not love it. I loved at once several people who passed on bicycles as I stood there. To come back to Oxford is to realise one's own personality exactly. Oxford is the city of hideous contrasts. I am a man of hideous contrasts. I am still as I was seventeen, thirteen years ago. *Fra Lippo Lippi*—it is the life of the street that calls me—I hate the bars and bells—and yet—not only the street. On Sunday I walked from Burford to Minster Lovell. No fairyland of the imagination can come within a million miles of the actual. There are colours that beggar description; there are scents and sights (that peacock on the Tudor lawn, for instance) that whirl you into happiness; there are bathes that make you spiritually drunk. On Monday I walked from Boar's Hill to Sunningwell. I rediscovered the Fox Inn and saw the track of the Icknield Way. I had Jude the Obscure's vision seen from the other side. I want never to have to go back to those damnable books: I have seen England. I want to be a farmer near Oxford. I loved Oxford as an undergraduate and so took every chance of getting away from her. I have been here three and a half days, and nearly all of it has been spent in quiet places far away—Stanton Harcourt, Brize Norton, Bablockhythe. I have not changed. In the town I have seen certain things. It is the only place in the world where clothes fit their wearers. A London

tailor cannot make a coat without flying buttresses and gargyle buttons: no London tailor knows the meaning of flannel trousers. There is an Oxford manner. I was deaf to it before. It is solely concerned with retarded action in speech. I have acquired it in three days: I shall lose it in three more. There are motor buses to make our hard-won glories easier for you. We used to walk. The White Horse Hill is yours for a petty fee—but it is hard for you to pay. You collect half-sheets of note-paper. We drove to foreign cricket matches in grey top-hats on a coach and four. Bottles of champagne were put behind the wickets. Penury they say makes for sobriety (I am not thinking of drink). These are quiet days. In essentials you have not changed. Dons still ruffle like angry mother geese when the trespasser treads near her gosling brood. Dons dislike the return of graduates—they are quite rude. The goslings care not at all. They are completely unperturbed. They go on gabbling about “Non sequiturs,” they collect essays and runs and talk, dance and do everything well—and the graduate gazes spellbound at an assurance which is only comparable to the assurance of a newspaper proprietor when he explains to you how exactly he has gauged the public taste. Humility? I should rather think so. The don makes it clear that we have failed in life. The undergraduate makes it clear that we have no reason for existing. The buildings and the amazing wealth of early summer make it clear that we are demented to pursue wealth in a City office, when no wealth will buy one-millionth part of the enjoyment we get from sitting in a field in Ferry Hinksey. Neæra, the tangles of whose hair brushes our cheek as we dance

by night or lean over the counter by day, makes us realise that our dancing is not in the same world as that of George, who (thank God) is not a "student," and that romance is ours in profusion or else wholly barred from us solely through her caprice. The Cherwell by night reminds us that we cannot afford to get cold. Yes, I go away chastened as by a God who loves me with an exceeding great love, and yet I realise this too—regrets are even more vain than I had imagined. Had I my four years still to go, I should do what I did before. I have done during the last few days exactly what I did in the ancient years—loved many and quite well, been abject in the presence of the ordinary man, hiding my nervousness with an air of truculence in the presence of the truly great, taken far too much exercise, observed things to which I was blind before, been driven to a blind fury by the ugliness, dullness, stupidity and arrogance of certain things, fallen down and worshipped at the shrine of all kinds of beauty, and realised that any kind of vigour (I have no virtues) I may possess is wholly due to the uncanny influence which this queer place has exerted on me. As the train carries me townwards this is the ever-recurring refrain I hear: "Is there a city in the world where so many pretty girls ride about on bicycles?" And this is what has been called the monastic system. Shades of Christ Church meadows on Sunday evenings!

And so—let me begin my article. What did I come to see? Worcester Gardens and Addison's Walk? I haven't seen them. You? I haven't seen you. You have no vices and I no virtues—the gulf is impassable. Shops? There are shops (inferior, it is true) at Thurlestone and in London. Women? There are women

everywhere, and only the rich can afford to have secret places in their hearts. I do not know what I came to see, but I know what I have seen—Myself—and it has given me (as Mr A. S. M. Hutchinson would say) a severe jolt. I can forgive myself (hardly) deep lines and the legs of a Justice Shallow: I find it impossible to forgive the sameness of me—the fact that I glory in the bad, sad, mad but sweet (I must drag in a Victorian tag in Oxford, surely) vulgarities of my youth. I am altogether gipsy, no scholar. I have the soul of a very young shop assistant. It is a democratic age—why not? This article has, as I said, a purpose—it is to give you a chance to pat yourself on the back and thank God that you are not as I am. It is also to console the ghost of a lost youth I once knew who was always ashamed of himself. I want to know why he was ashamed.

XIV

THE SUSSEX DOWNS

i

IT was outside the Aquarium at Brighton that I boarded the green South Downs omnibus labelled "Newhaven—Eastbourne."

A young man with an ordnance map settled at my side. "Where are you going?" I began at once.

"I don't know," laughed he. "And you?"

"I don't know," I replied.

"We might go there together."

The conductor then repeated the question. "Seaford," I said quickly, taken off my guard. Perfect things happen like that.

We dismounted after a generous two shillings' worth of jolting and climbed the white road to the top of High and Over. There was neither sound nor sight of living creature. A barn, yellow and green with lichen, radiated heat from its sunburnt walls and there was a smell of straw. Through a gap in the trees Alfriston Church showed like an opal in an emerald ring. On the stone flags of the cool parlour of the Star Inn a cat lay coiled.

We ate cold lamb, new peas and potatoes, gooseberries and cream; we drank. On the village green an old man, well bearded, capered round a tethered goat in vain endeavours to paint it. I lay in the long

grass and laughed. Three sailors ceased from snoring at the sacrilege.

An hour later we again lay down—this time on the top of Firle Beacon—and pitied the poor motorists eight hundred feet below. Time and men, cities and machinery lost their meaning.

We sauntered on in silence till hunger drove us to descend to the valley of the Ouse. We found a tea-garden at Southease; we ate honey and scones; we drank tea by the pint.

The evening lights called us back to the heights, and the Downs closed in on us again as we fell into the green cup of Telscombe. Finally we tumbled down the hill into Rottingdean and found two vacant seats in a waiting omnibus. An hour later I was in the sea.

Why, you ask, was this a perfect day? I will explain.

A fourteen-mile drive and a four-mile walk whet the appetite for lunch perfectly. A remote village, rich in humour and beauty, is a perfect prelude to Parnassus. Our lunch was perfect; it was eaten in a nine-hundred-year-old inn. All lonely heights are perfect—the South Downs are both high and lonely. To descend at tea-time and find not only a hamlet like Southease, but a rose garden and honey, is not only perfect—it borders on the miraculous.

To find an omnibus waiting when legs are weary is perfect and uncanny. To hit on a chance companion who fitted into one's mood instantly was also perfect. My shoes and clothes were just perfectly comfortable; my meals were perfect. I am, in fact, a fastidious epicure who once tasted perfection.

And yet to-day I refuse to believe that it ever happened. It was all too good to be true. I wonder

what my fellow-walker thought. I expect he was a wraith.

ii

“I have two doctors,” said G. M. Trevelyan once, “my right leg and my left.” Very true; but it is not enough to have a doctor, or even two; you must use them with discretion. On Sunday I watched myriads of smartly dressed men and women exercising their legs on the Hove Lawns on Church Parade (so called because the parade takes the place of church.)

Not one of them was gaining any beneficial effect other than the mental stimulus created by comparing themselves favourably with everyone else. Yesterday my legs called on me to use them, so I walked straight up from the beach, past the villadom of Sackville Street, through the allotments and turned left-handed by the water-works. I was on the Downs! On the highroad on the farther ridge I saw an endless procession of cars and cyclists, for all the world like mammoth ants. For my part, I had the soft, springy green turf, flocks of sheep, a few horsemen—and wide spaces, the hills and the sea.

The track led me past golf-links, and I wondered at the mental calibre of men and women who will not take exercise unless there is some incentive other than nature's to urge them on.

Within an hour of leaving the Brighton sea-front I was on the Devil's Dyke, with a view on every side surpassable only in Devon and the Highlands. But were the crowds looking at it? Not they. They were shying things at coco-nuts; they were consulting a raucous palmist in cap and gown; they were eating, drinking,

talking scandal. I left them to it and again turned left-handed. In five minutes I was in another world.

Fulking Hill is just as high as the Devil's Dyke, and it was completely deserted. It must be adder-ridden. For a moment or two I picked my way, Agag-like, among the yellow gorse, and then threw myself on the ground and gave myself up to the ecstasy that only comes to lonely men on lonely hills. A sea of meadow-land six hundred feet below, with ridges of green trees like waves, with grey church towers, red-tiled hamlets and old manor-houses peeping through. Far away to the north, Leith Hill, Hindhead ; west, the ring of trees on Chanctonbury ; south, the serene blue of the sea.

Troubles fell from me like the pack from Christian's back ; I ate, I sang, I got up and ran down a steep dip, then sauntered slowly up to Edburton Camp, down another dip, up Trueleigh Hill, and there before me lay a vast valley, once covered with the sea, now richly timbered. I had no idea where I was. A shepherd sprang from nowhere. "Yon?" he asked. "Yon's Bramber."

"A lovely name," I said. "I'll go down." I was haunted by something of Hilaire Belloc's as I tumbled down the precipitous smooth sides of the hill ; the merry laughter of girls in a convent garden at Beeding recalled me to earth. I was on a road, by some miracle not dusty. I crossed a stream, the Adur, dirty and narrow, but filled with canoes. Then came Bramber ; every house with its tea-garden.

I went on ; there was a hill beyond calling me. It was the sleepy antiquity of Steyning that ensnared me. Mine host of the White Horse was a courteous gentleman ; he liked my ingenuous delight at his sporting

prints. I learnt much of the Steyning cricket team. I went to watch them play—for three overs. The call of the hill was too strong. In twenty minutes I was on Steyning Round Hill—a smooth, perfect crescent of green. An hour later I had made Chanctonbury Ring, with its crown of beeches, my own for ever. As E. V. Lucas says: “No sublimity, no grandeur, only the most spacious repose.” It is the utter peace of these downs, the balm which they shower on the soul, that makes them great.

As I came back to life I passed a couple of picnickers asleep. I have never seen such perfect happiness on the human face except in sleeping children.

I caught an omnibus at Steyning and was in Brighton in another hour—hills and the sea and perfect peace. Take a train to Brighton and walk straight out of it and health is yours. You may walk ten, twenty, thirty miles, and whenever you choose to drop from your height you will find an omnibus or a train to take you home. In the Highlands or in Devon you may be over-zealous—distances are great—too much doctoring is as bad as none. On the South Downs you will saunter—the only true panacea.

iii

There is no longing comparable to man's longing for the hills, but the Cairngorms are far away, even Exmoor and Dartmoor cannot be reached and explored in a day; only the South Downs remain. We are inclined to despise the easily accessible, so the Highlands hold a glamour for us which is partly due to their distance from us, while the South Downs suffer an undeserved neglect because of their very proximity.

“We can go there at any time,” we say, and they remain unvisited.

Occasionally we are stirred by men like E. V. Lucas and Hilaire Belloc to get a glimpse of the enchantment that captivated them, but we are more often content to sit in motor car or motor char-à-banc and view the heights from afar. The South Downs unfold their beauties and reveal their mysteries only to the walkers—men of the stamp of Mr Charles Vince, who in *Wayfarers in Arcady* entices us once more to leave the beaten highway and explore that mysterious, aloof, long, unwavering line that cuts off the sea from the weald.

“The Downs,” he says, “do not change. There is something in their pure and beautiful shape which is stronger than any storms and than all the moods of the sky. . . . They are simple and they are sure. . . . No man could love them and not keep in himself some sweetness and sanity and a belief in gracious things. . . . On their heights the valleys and the hills meet. There are no sheltered and tended gardens in all England where the flowers bloom as they bloom on this open turf, fed by the south-west wind and the salt sea mists. They are sown as close with the pale rock roses as is the sky with stars, and their poppy-fields are like flame, and their great gorse slopes like golden light across the miles. . . . In all the combes along the Downs between Adur and Arun are little companies of trees that are gathered close together and seem to press in against the Downs.”

The very names of the villages at their feet have a Shakespearean ring about them: “Midhurst and Petworth, Amberley, Bramber, Wilmington, Friston, Beddingham and Glynde. What more do you want to know of any place than its name and how far it is to go there?”

Yet how thankful we are when we are on the heights to feel that men will never go up a hill when they can go down. The shepherds are the only living souls we meet, and they, we feel, are the only men who could be in tune with our moods, for we are transfigured as soon as we tread the soft, clean-clipped green turf, and a benign calm descends on our souls.

The villages in the valley may have haunting names, but we have no wish to go down to them. Ecstasy is ours as the warm west wind blows through our hair, as some fresh, unforgettable vision swims into our ken, the vague outline of the Isle of Wight from Chanctonbury, the setting sun on Chichester Cathedral seen through a gap from Rackham Hill, the stern grandeur of Arundel Castle rising from the trees, the sweet suddenness of Telscombe, Mr Vince's "village at the world's end," as you fall into it over the brim of Highdole Hill, the quiet splendour of Friston Place and Highden House and Parham.

If you want to fall head over ears in love with the country that is your own, walk out of your house or hotel in Eastbourne or Brighton, step out of the train at Amberley or Lewes, go to Findon, Storrington or Steyning and just climb the nearest hill. In half-an-hour all the pack of burdens that weighs you down in the valley will have fallen from your shoulders. You are now made free of the earth and the sky and the sea. All human worries will seem petty trifles. Wander at your will, forget direction and time. When your eye is diverted from the track, follow it; lie down and listen to the larks, the gulls, the wash of the sea on the pebbles below the cliff edge, and the sheep bells. Let your eyes feast on the riot of colours from the poppies

and the mustard, on the rounded curves, so bare and austere in their beauty, of the rolling Downs.

iv

I made many mistakes in my walk : the first was in walking the whole length of the Brighton front.

When I arrived, quite tired, at Black Rock I was confronted by a blank wall of mean shops, each bearing the inscription : “ You may pass through this shop to the Downs by making a purchase.”

There was something Dantesque about this which made me glad that I had bought matches earlier in the day, so I turned aside down the dingy street and emerged at the end on vast allotments of incredible ugliness.

But soon I gained rising ground over the sea and had a view of the towers of Roedean, the school that Hugh Walpole may have had in mind (for his scenic effects only) when he wrote *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill*.

I nearly missed Ovingdean altogether ; these South Downs villages hide themselves shyly from the public eye under the shadow of a few green trees ; only the pyramid-shaped towers of their churches give them away. I pressed on to a bare, rounded hill, surmounted by an old windmill.

When I topped the rise I looked down into Rottingdean—I don’t wonder that Burne-Jones and Kipling left it. It must have been a good village ; it makes a bad seaside town ; paddlers, preparatory schools and smug suburbia have frightened Puck o’ Pook’s Hill away. I hurried through it and sauntered up the white chalk path past the kennels to a high ridge—and

at last felt again the peace and vastness of the Downs sink into my soul.

It was on Highdole Hill that I lay down gasping ; my map had not led me to expect it. At my feet lay the prettiest village I have ever seen—ten houses, a tiny church, set haphazard like white tea-leaves in a green cup, two fields fenced off with white railings—a medley of thatch, brown tiles, creeping ivy, a deep, dark green plantation of young firs. Beyond it lay the valley of the Ouse, and on the farther side sweep upon sweep of rounded downs, Malling and Beddington Hill, white cliffs and blue sea.

I dared not descend to the village ; it was a dream city, discovered by accident. I just lay and gazed—and went to sleep. When I woke up I walked slowly round the brim of the cup and surveyed my village from every angle, like a small boy eating round the outside of a hot gooseberry fool.

It is still my dream city—no one entered it or left it during that afternoon—and in the end I tore myself away by running down a smooth glassy slope straight to the sea cliffs and walked home.

That was a mistake. The path along the sea cliff is dull ; the air is not so good ; there are too many lovers about ; the beach is slimy.

At Rottingdean tired young men were urging grey-flannelled infant batsmen to "Put that foot across" ; at Roedean brown-legged schoolgirls giggled as they gently patted tennis balls over a net ; on the broad highway of the Brighton front spruce damsels sauntered and youths flicked canes. . . .

No. Take a bus to Rottingdean and walk over the Downs to my dream city. Profit by my mistakes.

XV

THE SOUL OF BOURNEMOUTH

BOURNEMOUTH is the Mecca of the North Countryman and the Midlander ; the Nirvana of the neurasthenic.

Fettered for the best part of his life to a climate where the chill damp is so good for cotton, so bad for himself, where the continuous rain is dirty with coal dust and the fog seldom lifts, is it strange that the industrial worker strives to retire to a town where the skies are always blue, the wind languorous, delicately scented with the pine, the scenery a riot of colour, the houses and streets spotlessly clean and spacious ?

If you live in mean, narrow streets, where the cobbles re-echo ever to the wheels of drays and the clogs of the factory hands, your El Dorado will contain only smooth tarred roads of great width, on which limousines glide silently.

The north incites men to amass wealth in order to leave it. When the Lancastrian retires he buys a roomy red-bricked house overlooking the blue sea, surrounded by trees that are always green.

You wonder at the amazing popularity of this vast stretch of land that encroaches on the New Forest on the one side and disturbs the age-old seclusion of sleepy Dorset on the other. It is not bracing : no one who goes to Bournemouth walks ; he goes to sleep as he drives. He rises late and goes to bed early. Small children

do not run about. They sail boats lazily on the stream that runs through the gardens, or lie full length on the shore, letting the sand slip idly through their fingers.

There is no air of hustle in the excellent shops. Women take a day to choose a hat and men an hour to sample a new cigar ; there is a great book-buying public, which speaks for itself. In Bournemouth there is time to read ; there is time for everything.

As an antidote to the noisy restlessness of modern life there is no town to compare with it. The young may snort with contempt at "The Invalids' Walk" and the multitudes of bath-chairs, but a bath-chair life is the best holiday in the world for those who fight daily for breathing space on bus or Tube. Youth must go elsewhere if it wishes to impress us with its ability to "blind."

To be able to move on top gear at three miles an hour is the summit of the ambition of those who drive along the Undercliff ; it gives them time both to admire and be admired. For there is much that is admirable in the Bournemouth girl, much that is delectable in the gentlemen-drivers' cars.

The most luxurious cars in England are to be seen in the greatest numbers on the Bournemouth front. The owners need no description ; the men are much the same as you see everywhere else ; they are spruce, with clear-cut features, successful in business, young, alert, gay and expert in the art of dalliance.

But the Bournemouth girl is of a very pronounced and somewhat unusual type ; she is pretty—nearly every modern girl is that—she dresses quietly and becomingly, she is demure, and interested in many other things than men and their cars. She knits jumpers

methodically, but with no marked hurry, she reads—not in spasms, looking up at the end of every page, but continuously and with obvious interest; she goes to the band to listen to it, not to criticise the audience; she goes to the Windover Skating Rink to skate, not to flirt.

She also goes to church—she is of a type that makes good wives.

When she bathes she swims; her conversation is a delight and her laughter spontaneous, betraying sunny-tempered intelligence. Lucky are the men who can say: “I first met my wife at Bournemouth.”

The train service is bad; it is impossible to walk, owing to the enervating air, so most visitors exhaust their energies climbing down to the beach and lying there. The wise man will take a car and explore the lonely depths of the Forest and the sweetly named rustic hamlets of mid-Dorset. There he will find a perfect holiday in perfect peace, among slow-moving yokels of extraordinary courtesy, humour and charm.

XVI

“ DOCTOR BRIGHTON ”

THERE comes a time in every busy man's life (not necessarily only in July and August) when he hates the thought of work and the sight of his home ; even his wife bores him.

He goes to his doctor, who tells him that he is “ run down,” and gives him a tonic which ought to cure him if remedial properties are to be judged efficacious in proportion to their nastiness.

Alas ! one may swallow gallons of most unpalatable mixtures without feeling a whit the stronger. Instead of spending money on a doctor when you are “ run down,” cure yourself by taking a “ run down ” to Brighton. Three days will work miracles for you, but you must follow out exactly the prescription I am going to make up for you.

In the first place, you must travel by First Class Pullman in order to give yourself a sense of complete change at once from your overcrowded, uncomfortable suburban trains, also to put you in a good temper and to make you deceive yourself with the belief that you are among the leisured millionaires of this world.

You will have booked a room at the most pretentious hotel in the town and on arrival make friends with the manager and head waiter, if you do not already know them. You may wish to demur at this on the ground that your income only runs to a cheap boarding-house.

Put yourself in my hands and you will not exceed the most modest of limits. A cheap hotel is no good to you in your present condition ; you are only going to throw your money away and return worse than when you set out.

Having arrived at the hotel, you will order the fire to be lit in your bedroom at six o'clock, so that you can dress for dinner in comfort ; you will then go for a long, brisk walk on the promenade, inhaling as much of the sea air as you can. At frequent intervals you will say to yourself : “ *I feel much better already.* ” You will vary this formula with : “ *I'm beginning to feel devilish hungry.* ” The odd thing is that as you climb the hotel steps on your return you will actually and definitely feel very hungry and much better. A hot bath, a leisurely change of attire and you will descend to the lounge about seven-thirty. You will then give yourself about a quarter of an hour watching your fellow-guests.

This in itself will go a long way to cure you, for several reasons.

First, you will begin to preen yourself and compare your own bodily appearance with that of your neighbours, to their very considerable disadvantage. Then you will wonder why rich people all look ugly and peevish and unhealthy, and begin to thank heaven that you at any rate are not like these.

Just when you are beginning to give up hope of ever seeing a Christian soul two cheery figures will emerge from the lift, catch sight of you and rush towards you with outstretched arms. I defy you to pass more than a few hours in any great Brighton hotel without meeting someone who was at school or the university with

you ; some pal you last saw in Mesopotamia or Cambrai.

This unexpected meeting will do much towards your cure, because the first coherent statement that your friend will make (after ordering cocktails) is, " You poor fish, you *are* looking fit," after which you will descend to the baby language of the day so beloved of your subalterns and help yourself to a " perfectly good gasper," after having delivered yourself of the remark that " a box at the Hippers or a ' hop ' at the Granders seems to be indicated, what ? "

" Time to go into the odd dinner," suggests one of the party ; " what about a perfectly good table together ? " Without the semblance of a blush you will then say : " Oh, that's all right, the odd head waiter's one of the best ; you come to my perfectly good table ; I always have it reserved for me "—and so on.

A hilarious meal will be followed by a dance from eight-thirty till midnight.

Late at night you will talk over old days in front of the bedroom fire and retire to bed convinced that the world is very rosy and that you have hitherto been distinctly undervalued ; you decide that when you go back to work you will not only deserve promotion, but get it : money suddenly looms large before you as a necessity of life by no means difficult to secure.

Refreshed by the " perfectly good odd " sleep, due to the fact that you resisted the temptation to get " sizzled," you will descend at ten o'clock the next morning with prodigious appetite to eat an enormous breakfast after a hot sea-water bath as big as the ocean.

You will spend the morning in the invigorating

exercise of gazing at the shops and “wanting” things : one of the healthiest forms of amusement is to be found in just not buying expensive luxuries which you feel you need, but certainly cannot afford.

You will not lunch at the hotel but at some inexpensive café. This action will make you feel quite extraordinarily virtuous and clever. You use the best of hotels to sleep in, to dine in and to breakfast in, but though you use it as your home through the day you incur no other expense there at all. Incidentally a small lunch and tea means that you can do full justice to breakfast and dinner, the only meals, after all, that really matter.

You may spend the afternoon trying the “odd” penny-in-the-slot machines on the pier, breathing the while “the perfectly good air,” for which no charge is made, but is none the less the main reason of your visit.

You will not, if you are wise, visit any place of amusement for three reasons. First, you may see far better shows in London ; secondly, you will thrill with pride to think that you are actually saving money by giving them a miss ; thirdly, the lounge of your “perfectly good hotel” will furnish you with far more amusement than even the best London theatres. People in the mass are always funny ; the people who frequent the best hotels in Brighton are peerlessly so. You will see nothing like them at home.

If you feel that you aren’t getting enough air, give yourself one whole day with the Brighton beagles. Your breakfast will keep you going while you are out, and you will return with such an appetite for dinner that you may surprise even the head waiter.

One thing I promise you, so long as you follow the

simple rules I have laid down you will go back to work a different man, a wolf for work (your ambition has been stirred: like your liver, it was too sluggish), delighted to see your wife (who could give points to every girl you saw in Brighton), perfectly fit, bodily and mentally. You have given your physical system and your brain as complete a change as they could well get.

You'll find that the cure is cheap at the price, and you'll be surprised at the lowness of the figure. A doctor would be ashamed to charge so little.

XVII

BROMFORD

I WOULD have you under no misapprehension as to my purpose. I have no remote Cornish hamlet, nestling in a fuchsia-laden combe, a study in reds and blues and greens, for your delectation, no picturesque mediæval abbey-township where the imaginative can conjure up dreams of corpulent monks and feudal lordlings clattering on horseback down the narrow streets in the cool of a midsummer evening . . . no; my mission is to transport you to a grey, dour, scattered village, set in the hideous colliery district of Middle England, a locality upon which Ruskin vented much venom in his horror at the deflowering of a virgin beauty by the ruthless hands of coal-seeking men.

Bromford is in the very heart of Bersetshire (pronounced by the natives as "Broomford" and "Birs'tsh'r"), a county chiefly remarkable for the fact that the sun is never powerful enough to penetrate the deep yellow pall of smoke which emanates from its thousand factory chimneys.

It is true that invalids are frequently deported here by their doctors to recover from rheumatism and consumption; our water and air are world-famous for their healing properties . . . but the water is sulphurous and noxious, the air chill and forbidding, and in many cases the patients prefer the disease to the

(possible) cure ; at any rate they feel nothing but relief when they summon up enough courage to disobey their physicians and are once more in the train which will convey them back to the sun, warmth and the world which they call home.

There are, however, some, like myself, who have been condemned, for professional reasons, to make this nauseating country their hostel for the best years of their life, and have found that, like most things in their earthly pilgrimage, familiarity breeds a certain sense of affection. . . . Bromford, in spite of its many obvious shortcomings, has many compensations.

It is set high on top of a rude moor, open to all the winds that blow, and extends for some four miles north and south, and one and a half east and west, an extensive parish for the conscientious vicar to traverse, as he does daily, year in, year out, in his visits to his none too godly flock. It boasts two coal mines, five stone quarries and four tape mills, claiming the majority of the population, which falls just short of two thousand, for the greater part of each day.

They are a rough, independent folk, these Bromford men and women. Unaccustomed to the softening influence of rich people (there are no "gentry" in Bromford itself, with the exception of the vicar and his wife), they have no occasion to bow the knee to any man ; the touching of caps, the appellation "sir" or "ma'am" is unknown among this community ; every man is as good as his neighbour, and is, as each individual never tires of repeating, "Strong i' th' arm and thick i' th' yed."

Most of the villagers are the recipients of ample wages, most of which ultimately finds its way into the

pockets of the local public-house keepers, of whom there are six. Nightly do these social clubs re-echo to the sound of some inharmonious ditty, unknown outside the sodden Midlands; nightly as the vicar doffs his carpet slippers in order to undertake the perilous task of locking up the coach-house and the church he hears some drunken "Wassailer" loudly declaiming to the starry welkin his belief that "no matter wha-at a man doth wear, his fu-ulishness it will appear," as he staggers home to bully his wife before retiring to his rest. There is little to do in Bromford but drink when work is over; the young swain's fancy may lightly turn to thoughts of love . . . but his elders find their eternal consolation in "glorious beer," which acts as a perfect narcotic, causing them to forget entirely the monotony and ugliness of their existence and of the morning's grind in the quarry or the pit.

The women content themselves with gossip over the fence with their neighbour except on Saturday nights; then they venture farther afield to do their week's marketing at the county town of Marbreck, which contains a station on the Great Central Railway, two streets lined with shops of every sort and three cinemas. True, these shops would not please the fastidious taste of those who frequent the Charing Cross Road, for there are no book-shops.

Bersetshire acts up to the Stevensonian dictum that "Books are a mighty bloodless substitute for life." The Midlander is not remarkable for his interest in the finer arts; his main enthusiasm, if enthusiasm it can be called which relies on betting for its continuity, is whether "T' County'll beat at Sheffle o' Sat'd'y." His talk runs interminably on League football.

No, the chief shops sell tripe, fish, chips, cheap jewellery, shoddy clothes and pork. There are, of course, grocers, photographers, and tobacconists who also sell *The Manchester Chronicle* and *The Police Budget*, and are willing for a smaller sum than you would expect to shave you and cut your hair. On the bridge which spans a river, the beauties of which you are likely to miss owing to the football ground and refuse-pit on its banks, stand, when work is done, fearfully and wonderfully attired youths, whose chief occupation in life is the uttering of loud ribaldry at the expense of all the passers-by whose physique is obviously less perfect than their own.

It would be impossible to describe their peculiar form of laughter. It is not like the crackling of thorns under a pot, it is not like the scratching of a pencil across a slate, yet it is reminiscent of both. It is, none the less, of great importance to the student of depraved human nature, it is a guide to character, it betrays vacuity, callousness, brutal cruelty and an ignorance that is all the more inexcusable and black because it mistakes itself for superiority . . . in what department of human life it would be hard to say. It is the laugh of the Yahoo. Their artillery of wit is easier to transcribe; let this be taken as typical:

“Eh, Joodge [George], luke see yonder; there’s thy Sarah Ann wi’ oor Ben.” (Chorus of coughs to attract the courageous Lothario.) “Ben, what’s yer got yon? Thou needna bloosh, Sarah Ann. Is oor Ben takkin’ thee to t’ cinemer so as ’e can kiss ’ee in t’ dark like? Coom, lass, speak oop, we canna ’ear thee. What’s tha sayin’?” (Imitations of kissing

follow.) “ ‘Oosh, Joodge, ‘er’s sayin’, kiss me quick an’ doant lissen to them laads, Ben darlin’.”

Ben obviously hesitated whether to take no notice or to leave his sweetheart in order to pick a quarrel. After a moment he chooses the latter course and, like a fox-terrier with its back hairs stiff, rises to the taunts of his friends.

“ Say that agen, ‘Arold Webster, and A’ll gie thee a jam in t’ yere-’ole as you wunna forget this side Christmass.”

“ Noaw, doant be soft, Ben Palfrey, or A’ll feight thee in t’ street and t’ copper’ll coom an’ all.”

“ Wull, A woant stan’ non o’ thy lip, so A’m telling thee; tha leave me and Sarah Ann aloan or A’ll mook thy faace oop. Eh, I will an’ all, thee —— toad thee.”

“ Thee duresn’t.”

“ Thou’lt see ‘oo dursent in ‘arf a tick, me lad.”

“ ‘Oo’ll see ? ”

“ Thou’lt see—an’ all.”

“ Oh, A’ll see, will I ? I’m non so sure o’ that. Ben, A’m non frightened o’ a wizen like thee. A’m non. D’y’ear wot A’m tellin’ thee ? A’m non frightened o’ thee.”

“ An’ A’m non frightened o’ thee neether.”

“ An’ A’ve got summat better to do nor waste my fistesses on the likes o’ thee.”

And so on, and so on.

The shades of night draw on and the cavalcade of returning pilgrims may be dimly discerned retracing their steps up the steep white Bromford road, weary after the excitements of the weekly shopping. Babies in arms, wan, weather-beaten mothers, drunken

fathers, manure carts full of parcels and one or two broken-down old cabs gradually reach the top of the turnpike, from which can be faintly descried the twinkling lights of the cottages on the moor which connote home and Bromford once more, and by eleven o'clock there will be silence over the deserted country, preparatory to the weekly luxury of a leisure day.

Sunday in Bromford is in very truth a day of rest. But few of the inhabitants rise before midday. Those who do, refresh their souls, not with the Bible, but with lurid and spicy news from their favourite Sunday journals which revel in disclosing the more filthy vices of their fellow-men. Education has done just this and no more for the Bromfordian; it has disclosed to him the knowledge of evils of which he knew not, and in spirit, without fear of punishment, he can commit like crimes to his heart's content. The church bell calls men to Holy Communion at eight. The schoolmaster and two assistant teachers attend—three out of two thousand. At ten-thirty it rings out more convincingly and for a longer time and reaps a harvest sometimes of twenty-five, sometimes of fifty. Was it worth while for the fifty's sake to have built a house of God in this place? As a matter of fact, the many chapels are much fuller. The Midland counties are the home of Dissent. "There is no Popery about Bersetshire," as one High Anglican divine once laughingly asserted. In the afternoon the factory girls, decked out in wonderfully alluring and seductive frocks, stroll in couples on the off-chance of captivating some young man and making him desert the male occupation of sitting on the stile by the village green.

Evening service is well attended, partly for the same reason: the church has its fascinations as a hunting-ground for young lovers, and the devotees of Venus have a pull over the worshippers of Bacchus, for their temple is open the whole year round, while the Bacchanalians have to forgo their cherished rites on Sunday evenings. But there is another side to the Bromford Sunday. In the summer visitors choose that day to explore our miniature mountain tarn, and there they bathe in ice-cold water and even, in their simple ignorance, imagine that they enjoy alfresco lunches on the banks, despite the absence of a warming sun. Archæologists ransack Bethwick Farm for traces of the Tudor mansion which once belonged to the ill-starred Anthony Babington; hardy pedestrians on week-end walking tours through the Peak hurry through on their way from Georgian Chatsworth to mediæval Wingfield, with scarcely a glance at the treasures of mill-stream and woodland, of nursery gardens and small farms, all inextricably mixed up with factory chimneys and hideous mountains of "slack." Lovers of beauty pass us quickly by with perhaps a shudder at the more poverty-stricken cottages or the hideous malformation, miscalled a castle, which crests the hill overlooking Marbreck.

Social workers and those who would study the many problems appertaining to rural poverty, however, would find much to repay them in Bromford if they would deign to visit us; the only difficulty is that they would experience great trouble in getting to know the true facts of any case they took up. Mrs Askwyth would deny to any stranger that her husband used the poker to her three nights a week on an average, though she

confides in Mr Boyd. No patriotic Bromfordian would ever allow that George Philpot, the schoolmaster, had been seen staggering into school dead-drunk, though such is the common story of the children. No one outside the village knows that Bill Heage lives entirely on his predatory instincts and is the cleverest poacher in the county. Few people could be found to tell you the truth about Sally Martin, Nancy Palfreman and Gertie Barker, all of whom have sought death in the mill-pond at the early age of seventeen in the last four years rather than "face the music"—for what? We all know—but we won't tell you, whatever means of cajoling us you employ. You might wonder at the anomaly of seeing an obviously cultured graduate of Cambridge spreading manure in a field; if you were brave you might attempt to get into communication with him, and stand aghast at the mingled wisdom and irrelevance of his answers; but if you tried to go back with him to the barrack-like farm where he worked, several fierce dogs would effectively prevent you from discovering the appalling conditions that obtain in our private asylum.

It might not unreasonably be concluded from these tragic instances that we live in an atmosphere of horrors, but, as a matter of fact, no Scandinavian dramatist following the Ibsen tradition would be able to make much of our gloom, for it is by no means of the inspissated type. For the most part we do not dwell on our more sordid side; we have our mirthful moments; our whortleberries are luscious and succulent, even though they are disguised under the ugly name of bilberries, the furze blooms perennially on our hill-side, the brooks babble over the stones as well as Tennyson's

ever did, the children are pretty until they lose their teeth, the village girls are rosy-cheeked and even charming at times, our cricket and football teams contain many humorists, friendships once cemented are commonly of lifelong duration and exceeding precious, love-making continues and even marriages are sometimes idyllic.

There must be some fascination in our atmosphere or we should not be so consistently overrun with visitors in the summer months. Novels and poems are written in the quiet seclusion of our cottage gardens, which penetrate into every cultured home in the country; pictures of the lone firs on Marson Mount, of the winding Wye which lends an Elysian enchantment to the Elizabethan splendour of Haddon Hall, of the swans on the "Big Dam" are painted and exhibited in all the great gallerys in the land; the jaded business man finds a soothing restfulness in our quiet meadows and on the banks of our innumerable streams; the ardent walker can tire himself out climbing up and down our crags and peaks. It is easy to be contemptuous of nature's attainments in Bromford, but there is a secret, as Meredith found in the woods of Westermains, well worth the wresting for those who care to discover it. But it requires courage and an unassailable optimism. Such readers I would, in Meredith's phrase, entreat to "Enter these enchanted woods, ye who dare." You will be rewarded.

XVIII

IN PRAISE OF LONDON

YOU who still remain to carry on the nation's most necessary work in London, do you ever realise the multitudinous blessings which the Mother City has bestowed on you ? Man is notoriously ungrateful ; but it might make you realise more acutely what you so heedlessly enjoy and take as a matter of course if you were permitted to see for a moment into the hearts of some of us who are temporarily banished from the haven where we would be.

There is a sort of man whose heart is all the time in London, no matter where he goes or what he is doing. In the silence of the desert he hears the throb of the mighty, restless heart of the metropolis ; on the tops of gigantic, well-nigh inaccessible peaks in South America he pictures again the light-hearted, gaily bedecked crowds at lunch in the " Picc." or the Berkeley ; in the dead of night in the trenches he looks at his watch and thinks what Londoners are doing at that moment, of the theatres emptying their vast hordes of seekers after gaiety, of the unending stream of taxis hurrying away to the Savoy or the Carlton, with happy couples intent only on draining the short cup of life and youth and love to the lees.

Have you who read this ever stood at the Oxford Circus Tube Station entrance for the space of, say, five minutes, about six or seven o'clock in the evening, and

given yourself up to the mere contemplation of the beauty of it all ? Try it and see whether something of the ineffable preciousness of London does not sink into you—you who are so rich in the daily possession of it, and yet are so blind to its infinite charm and variety. For, you may ask, what is there to be seen at such an unromantic place at such an unromantic time ? Well, there is the glow of the sun paving all that great street to the west with gold, there is the music of the pattering feet of humanity released from its labours, there are the dainty figures of the alert, healthy, good-featured shopgirls (how far prettier London girls are than any others in the world) hustling for bus or Tube, the myriad types of passers-by of all sorts, virtuous and vicious, aristocratic and gutter-bred, poets, parsons, fishmongers, soldiers, policemen, scavengers, novelists, munition makers, powerful City magnates, all jostling each other on their respective ways home. There is the ever-present sense that you are in the very vortex of the universe, with all the most famous men of the age within easy telephone call—some of them even brushing past you while you loiter here. Who knows but what this man may be Arnold Bennett, or that Churchill or Belloc or Augustus John, or a prominent V.C. or barrister ? The cream of England's brains is contained within a radius of five miles of you ; you have a feeling that here, at any rate, you do *live*.

Why, my good sir, think of yourself at this same hour at Puddleton Magna. What is happening there ? Mrs Harrison is telling the vicar the same story about her "rheumatics" at the Market Cross which she has told him at this self-same place and hour daily for fifteen years ; the cows are ambling past the doctor's

gate, as cows from Barton Farm have always ambled past at this hour since the house was built ; the village schoolmaster, having corrected his exercises, is just getting over the stile leading to Puddleton Minor, in the initial stages of the walk which he has taken every night for thirty years ; the village idiot is leaning over the bridge, looking vacantly into the placid waters of the Yeo, as he does all day and every day. The whole place is asleep, stagnant, vicious, rotten—like a piece of wood suffering from dry-rot.

Can you, busy Londoner, imagine what it must be like to be in such a state of mental vacuity that the everyday knock of the postman causes your heart to beat with excitement, not because you are expecting good or bad news, but simply because the postman is your only visitor during the day ? Can you imagine yourself stuck down for the best and most virile days of your life in a place where new books are not procurable ; where conversation runs eternally on the crop of potatoes and foot-and-mouth disease ; where a smart frock or a pretty face is never to be seen ; where the sight of a tramp on the roads fills you with joy, because his face is unknown to you ? You Londoners may sentimentalise the beauties of nature as seen in our country hedgerows and meadow streams, but have you ever stood on the Embankment on a dark night and watched the flashlights flicker and dart about the sky and the lights of the boats shine through the gloom of the inky waters below you ? There is nothing in the country which can compare in sheer loveliness with that. It was Milton, you remember, who called the human face divine, and divine it certainly is ; the wild places have nothing to show more fair, more touching,

more majestic than the faces that are scattered about in Tube train that you may happen to travel home by any night of the week. All life is depicted for you there in that one compartment—hope, love, joy, despair, energy, murder, passion, jealousy, strife, envyings; there is no end to the romance, clear-writ on the countenances of any average twenty people you may chance to see on the top of a bus, in a suburban train, on the platform at Waterloo, in a queue outside the pit of Wyndham's Theatre or at a counter in Selfridge's.

Bacon made one of the supreme errors of his life when he aggressively asserted that a crowd is not company. To the live man who counts all men as his friends a London crowd is the most friendly thing in the world; it is full of humour and the milk of human-kindness; it educes all our sympathetic feelings, all that is most companionable in us; it evokes chivalry, compassion and unselfishness. After all, what is Life—I mean the charm of living? Does it not lie in the joy of conflict, of competition, of striving to make the best use of our talents—in a word, as Carlyle would have said, in the grandeur of work? And where else but in London do you get the best opportunity to fulfil your own destiny through working? The streets of London may not, perhaps, be paved with gold; they are paved, in point of fact, with something infinitely finer: they are paved with the footmarks of those who deliberately set out to achieve, of those who search unfalteringly for romance and adventure, of those who are not content to rest at each milestone and count over their gains and repine their losses, but rather, in the zest of battle, go on from struggle to struggle, from glory to

glory, doing their utmost—to adopt an illuminating vulgarism, “going full out” all the time.

Do you wish to keep in the van of modern thought ? There are lectures by the ablest men of the day on every latest discovery, to be had for nothing, galleries that may be visited, papers and books close at hand, conversations going on all round you wherever you may happen to be. Do you require refection after labour—amusement, gaiety, frivolity, that will not further tire your jaded brain ? Nowhere but in London can you be certain of procuring the best of its kind in this necessary department of life. Do you wish for quiet in order to contemplate and arrange your ideas ? You have only to turn out of Piccadilly into St James’s Park and you will be as lonely as you would be in the middle of Dartmoor. Perhaps tragedy has visited you of late : you try every distraction to lessen, if possible, the pain you are enduring. In the country there is nothing left for you but to “mope” and wander listlessly by yourself in the dreary, pitiless lanes ; in London there are thousands in like case with you, which in itself halves the suffering, and you can throw yourself wholeheartedly into what alone can assuage mental torture—congenial, all-absorbing work.

All London cries out for men with ideas, men with energy, men filled with a divine mission ; it stretches out unmistakable arms of welcome to all such. In the country they are regarded with suspicion as innovators, dangerous revolutionaries, subversive of the traditions that have stultified all rational growth.

On all sides we are being told that nothing will matter in the future in comparison with education, that the salvation of England will lie in the education

we give to the youth of to-day and to-morrow. What education can compare with that which the average Londoner can pick up for himself in the streets of his own city? Every advantage is his: in close contact with his fellows of every creed and in every stage of intellectual growth, surrounded by the finest products in Art of all the ages, in constant touch with the elementary and eternal verities of death and birth and love—it would be strange indeed if he were not, in the best sense of the word, educated, broad-minded, sympathetic, able to cope with the myriad problems which perplex poor erring humanity. He is able to study what use dazzling wealth makes of its advantages, what unnecessary horrors poverty brings in its train, how to combat disease and vice, how to ameliorate the whole lot of mankind; he learns to use his brain, not to neglect the legitimate relaxation which the hard worker requires, whether that relaxation lies in dozing in a punt on the river at Hampton Court, laughing at the jokes of George Robey or walking over the Surrey Hills.

In our Utopia the English Commonwealth of to-morrow, all ardent, youthful spirits, filled with the divine zest for making good, will flock to town, and leave the slothful, picturesque country-side to such as desire neither fame nor wealth nor the high destiny that awaits a nation's geniuses, to the tired and aged, the listless, the bucolic, the unambitious—the vegetables among men. And, lastly, lest misconception should arise owing to a recent unfortunate utterance of one of the greatest of our bishops, let it not be supposed that this London of ours, this city of dear, dear souls, is a hotbed of vice. There is but little wrong with the morals of the first city in the world; what there is,

is all superficial, remediable. With the hamlets and villages it is, alas ! far otherwise ; let him and his like visit us and cleanse us from the errors which have crept in during our years of forced indolence and leave the moiling, toiling Londoner, who has no time for viciousness, in order to preach to us who need him a thousand times more, because we are less easy to alter, far more in need of reformation.

It has become, of late years, rather the fashion to ridicule many of the shrewd sayings of the sanest of ages, the eighteenth century, and its finest product, Doctor Johnson, has earned a quite undeserved neglect at the hands of the young Georgians, but he coined an aphorism on this subject which contains the root of the whole matter. " He who is tired of London is tired of life," he once said, and the saying is literally and absolutely true. All our London geniuses have recognised it : Lamb found more fascination in his native streets than in the Lake Country, it was the source of Dickens's inspiration, and has been the canvas for countless themes of all novelists since his day. But none of these men has done justice to the million-sided appeal which London makes to all sorts of temperaments. In London you have life itself, which is beyond the power of Art to describe ; the view as you cross Hammersmith Bridge in the autumn evenings is finer than the most exquisite sonnet or piece of music or picture ever produced ; the lights of the underground station at Charing Cross ; Kew Gardens in lilac time ; barges ponderously moving down past Blackfriars ; Covent Garden, with its medley of fruit and publishers and theatrical agents ; the peerless symmetry of Regent Street—all possess a fascination which goes nearer to

make man happy than all the arts can ever hope to do.

You don't believe me? Go down to Waterloo and watch the expressions on people's faces as they arrive from the depths of the country, then turn to the departure platform and scan those going away. You will need no further proof. Of all the horrors in life separation from our loved ones is the worst, but there is a separation well-nigh comparable in misery with that, and that is the parting of the Londoner from his home. He buoys himself up with countless magazines, in the hope that he may lose himself in those; but does he read them? No. He keeps his face glued to the window and repeats over to himself the beloved names of the stations which take him farther and farther from all he holds most dear—Vauxhall, Clapham Junction, Wimbledon, Malden, Surbiton, Weybridge. By the time he has reached Woking the last flicker of hope vanishes, all traces of London have disappeared and he is solitary, sick at heart and filled with a dull resentment at a fate which so conspires to dash away from man's lips the cup that he so cherishes and others, more fortunate, despise.

XIX

“MILE HOUSE OF NUIDHE”

A MOST amazing event has happened. I have just received a letter from a very dear friend of mine whom I have lost sight of for many years, with this address on the note-paper: “Mile House of Nuidhe, Bromford, Bersetshire.”

At first sight this may not strike you as very extraordinary, but let me explain.

I first met Arnott-Williams at Cambridge; he then went to the Bar and fell madly in love with a girl, marriage with whom, for reasons into which I need not go, was emphatically disapproved of by his family and friends. But his passion was requited and they married and disappeared. I heard no more until this morning, when I received this wonderful letter:

“We have retired from the world and find our only happiness in the society of each other; we have at last found a place exactly suited to our requirements, an old manor-house of the Edwardian period, thickly enclosed with trees, with a Kenneth Grahame garden just made for children to play in. Isabel and I have already peopled it with fairy mites who play hide-and-seek in among the laurels up the drive . . . it is a place just after your own heart. It is far removed from the prying eyes of busybodies, and there is no danger of callers on account of our distance from civilisation. . . .”

It is almost unbelievable. Mile House of Nuidhe, where I was born and in which I spent the most glorious days of my early childhood ; Mile House of Nuidhe, which was sold when my grandfather went bankrupt to a dreadful ogre of a farmer who desecrated my sacred groves—now in the hands of Hugh Williams : it strains the laws of coincidences to breaking-point.

Here have I been all my life, like Warren Hastings, vowing to make good solely to bring back into the family a house which has been ours for over seven hundred years, and now my friend writes to tell me of its charms. I, forsooth ! who have spent all my holidays in a cottage within sight of it just in order to keep the flame of my energies alive, have to endure a description of my own home, every nook and cranny of which is dearer to me than life itself. It is monstrous.

I suppose that all the houses which we associate with our infancy have a halo round them like Great-Grandmother Field's in Lamb's *Dream Children* ; we never tire of roaming in the spirit about those huge mansions, with their vast, empty rooms, their worn-out “ flags,” fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, or in the spacious old-fashioned gardens with nectarines and peaches on the walls.

The Mile House of Nuidhe lies back from the road amid a forest of trees, which entirely hides it from the public view ; it is bordered by a vast, broad, flat-topped wall, along which, as a child, I used to run, all too conscious of my valour ; the only break occurred at the iron gateway at the top of the drive, crested by two stone cannon balls and twin griffins facing away from each other, to scale which was the top of my ambition.

Away to the north stretched illimitable farm buildings,

where I used to while away golden hours watching the cows and pigs, rolling about in the hay-loft, or talking to old Parker, my grandfather's carpenter, a man of infinite wit and untiring kindness, who could spin a yarn that would hold me, like Sir Philip Sidney's child, from play, and whose pockets were filled with treasures dear to the heart of youth: immense "hum-bugs," "bowie-knives," as I used to call the clasp-knife with which he was wont to dissect his luncheon, and rulers and pencils without number. All the meadows were irrigated by hundreds of minute streams just wide enough to permit of the passage of rival argosies of the thickness of a walking-stick—just torrential enough to be worth damming up and diverting from their normal course into long-disused channels. As a child I had a strange and mystic name for each of these, and never did I pine for the broad dull waters of the Wye or Derwent when I had these miniature cañons and "races" to navigate. The main brook of the village ran through my grandfather's property and led directly past a fallen-down mill called Beccott, the walls of which were covered with wild roses and honeysuckle, a favourite resort of adders, wasps and rats.

Over what we called the tennis lawn guinea-fowls ran wild, and in the farther corner of the garden, where the rookery was, dwelt several swarms of bees. The interior of the house had acquired a sort of aroma which I have never noticed anywhere else; it may have come from the dark old oak staircase or the oak wainscoting of the rooms—I never could find out its exact origin; the floor of the hall was paved with huge stones, on which the feet of my ancestors for these many hundred years have left their impress. The drawing-room in

those days was reminiscent of the eighteenth century : I remember an antique spinet, a broken solitaire board, and many Hogarth prints. The dining-room was a big, bare room, on the walls of which were many large Lelys and Gainsboroughs, heirlooms which now, alas ! like David Garrick's, have been sold to pay the family debts. It was an austere, sombre room, and all the massive furniture in it had the appearance of having grown there.

In every bedroom upstairs was a big four-poster bed, hung with curtains which used to terrify me ; I could never be sufficiently certain that burglars did not lurk behind them ; the fitful flame given by the candle (our only means of lighting in the house) only served to deepen this impression—and yet I wept, wept copious tears and long when the dread day came on which we had to quit. I vowed then (and have never forgotten that vow) that I would some day return rich enough to buy back the Mile House and restore it to its rightful owners.

I have never been able to keep away from it for long ; first there was school, then Cambridge, then life-work and now the war—but whenever I have been able to get back I have spent all my spare time in Bromford village, simply in order to be near my coveted home. Every penny that I earn, every penny that I can save is stored for this great purpose ; I let nothing interfere with my great ambition. Already I have planned out the furnishing of each room, the beds in the garden, and the animals I shall stock on the farm—only there must be children's laughter ringing lightly through the hall and re-echoing from the rafters ; there must be a faithful retinue of farm labourers who cluster round the great

oak table in the kitchen—I want it to be once more the house I used to know—and there are going to be difficulties.

I want to regain the ghost of my childhood's days, and live once more those ecstatic moments in racing sticks down the streamlets ; I want to watch the ducks in the farmyard pool, and the bees sallying forth from their hives in the sunny afternoons to extract sweetness from the wallflowers and pinks ; I want to roll in the hay-loft and ride in the carts, to listen to the voice of another Parker as he planes the sweet-smelling wood, to hear the clatter of the farm labourers on the kitchen " flags," to scent the musty, antique smell of old furniture, to go to bed by candle-light (I am more of an epicure in this even than Stevenson ; I will have no truck even with gas-lamps in the Mile House of Nuidhe). I want to be able to pluck the peaches and nectarines as they ripen from the north wall, to lose myself among the tropical raspberry canes, to play Indians among the thick bushes, the rhododendrons, the monkey-trees in the drive—there are a million things I will do when my ship comes in and I can return to the house that I desire. Instead of which I have to content myself in rooms where hideous photographic enlargements of my landlady and her husband hide the even more inartistic wall-paper, where grotesque china vases are strewn on the mantelpiece and the sideboard, and gaudy cups testify that the family have visited Blackpool, Skegness and Yarmouth to some purpose. Here I have to put up with wax and paper imitations of flowers, while all the time at Mile House luscious blooms grow in plenty, only to waste their sweetness on an unappreciative tenant. On the walls are ridiculous paintings of apples,

grapes and bananas on a plate, while scattered over the garden where I would be are the golden apples of the Hesperides in profusion, and all the fruits that make glad the heart of man. Here I am cabined, cribbed and confined within a space where my body cannot find room to stretch itself, while there I shall find unending passages, deep, cool recesses, and rooms large enough to contain the many flitting ghosts of my great ancestors. It is grossly unfair—and at times I am driven well-nigh mad with despair, not at my inability to earn enough money to buy the Mile House before I die, but at the thought that some crafty engineer may discover a coal-field under the foundations of the house and demolish it before I can prevent him. This is my incessant nightmare. I cannot rid myself of the depressing thought. Even if I were a millionaire it would be impossible to re-erect the house elsewhere; it must be situated where it is; the same stones must remain on the same site or I am lost, and the dream of my life will remain a castle in the air.

XX

SHERTON ABBAS

i

IN our small way we, too, like Olney and East Dereham, like Chalfont St Giles and Nether Stowey, have our literary tradition. True, had it not been for Thomas Hardy, we might have escaped notice by reason of our distance from the more ordinary haunts of pilgrims, but before ever the greatest of living novelists so thinly veiled our true name in his rechristening we had contributed not a little to the store-house of national literature. Was not Alfred the Great educated here? Is not Camelot still standing but a few miles distant, whence we can still see the Tor of Glastonbury and visualise the intervening waters that once flowed between the two peaks? Of all places teeming with the Arthurian legend, are we not the fullest, is not ours the most authenticated, do we not feel the very spirit of Arthur brooding over the Downs? Or, to come to later days, did not we provide Dickens with Mr Pecksniff? Is not the family of Guppy still with us? Even Mr H. A. Vachell thought it worth while to place the setting of an entire novel (*The Other Side*) in our midst, that he might dilate on the beauties of our gardens, the grandeur of our abbey and the quaintness of our habits. Let it not be thought from this, however, that we are another Troy Town, another Cranford.

Would that we were, or, if we are, would that I had eyes to see and Mrs Gaskell's power of expression to describe our life. And yet there is a fascination, a spirit, a whimsical charm about the place that I would communicate to you if I could.

In my early childhood in Devonshire all the squire's sons ever and anon departed to a mysterious place called school, from which they returned each time more and more god-like and more remote from me, who once in earlier days had been their bosom friend. I at once hated and envied this far-away school: hated it because it threatened to draw away from me my friends, envied it because it had the power so to do. I begged that I too might be allowed, when old enough, to be educated at this school; but no, we could not afford so expensive a type. When the time came I was hurried away to the north, where learning is sold more cheaply; but never did I cease from dreaming about this magic "best school of all"; and I built towers about it, exalting it out of all due proportion. Whenever I passed it on my journey westwards from Waterloo (it is on the main line) I would dart from side to side of the carriage, endeavouring vainly to catch a glimpse of the school I so loved and so desired. But the whirligig of time has brought in its revenges, for the most unexpected of all things was to happen: failing to have been here as a boy, I was appointed years afterwards as master.

This, although the summit of my ambitions, was a most frightening thing. I had become so accustomed to my dream as to mistake it for the reality. I thought the school really was a sort of inaccessible tower at the end of an avenue, flanked on either side by dense forests, where young giants openly derided and despised

me as I, only too conscious of my own nakedness and unworthiness, ventured to get a glimpse of its inner sanctity. Although I have been here now for two years I have not rid myself entirely of this feeling. My moods, therefore, in the long train journey which brought me from north to south varied from eager anticipation to something closely akin to dread. Arrived at the station, however, my first thought was that I must have hit on the identical place so eloquently described by Rudyard Kipling in *A Sunday at Home*; it was so inexpressibly quiet. For miles we had been getting into a more and more sparsely populated country, into more thickly wooded and absolutely rural scenery, when suddenly we were dumped down at this wayside station, with its long station board, "Sherton Abbas," its few hoardings, its stationmaster and two porters. There was no vestige of human life; no taxicabs, no vehicles of any sort, no busy hum of voices, no street. The one link with civilisation was the railway line. I inquired the way to the school and was told that it was behind the abbey (as if my dream-school could be missed!), and on leaving the station I found myself in some artificial public gardens, laid out to commemorate the first of English pageants, with a quite imposing hotel on my left called the "Kenelm Digby," obviously the home of hunting men and Americans. Straight before me rose the mediæval abbey, overshadowing all else with its huge, square, Merton-like tower. I longed to explore, but I was first impelled to find my school.

I was shown a small gate in a wall, which seemed to form part of the abbey (as indeed it does), and was informed that it was the entrance. Like Christian at

the wicket gate, I falteringly crossed the threshold and gazed with awe on the sight that met my eyes. It was as if I were back again in Oxford. Here were quadrangles leading out of quadrangles, diamond-shaped Tudor windows, old oak panelled dining-rooms and studies, and grass, the green of which could only have been cultivated by centuries of care. Going through a narrow stone-flagged passage, I found myself in a larger court, the south of which was bounded by the flying buttresses of the abbey, the west by the school chapel, the north and east by cloisters and schoolhouse. Penetrating the cloisters I came upon a still larger quadrangle, where sharp voices alternating with a hum of lesser ones proclaimed that I was in the region of the classrooms. So this was Sherton School. A boy brushed past me, running hurriedly with books; another and another followed; the big bell of the abbey boomed five o'clock, and streams of boys changing rooms flashed past me—ordinary, clean, stalwart, noisy boys; not my dream-giants at all. Instead of deriding they treated me as if I were not there. Not one of them even seemed to be aware of my existence. In a minute there was silence once more, broken only by the sharp monosyllables of an irate pedagogue and the murmur of a class at work. So this was to be my home.

I found my way into what was obviously the chief, if not the only, street—narrow, steep, not unlike that more famous one in Clovelly—and turning into a confectioner's solaced myself with tea, asking the while many questions about the school of my waitress. "Which school, sir?" she innocently asked, adding as a rider to console my look of dismay: "You see,

sir, there's a many schools 'ere: there's the girls' college, and the secondary and the King's for boys, and Foster's, besides the convent and the others. We're overrun with 'em, that we are!" . . . I pass over my hunt for a house in which to live and my settling down. Here I am, after two years, comfortable, happy, likely to attain a ripe old age before I can tear myself away from such a haven. The boys are in danger of becoming ordinary boys to me, the place of becoming an ordinary, hum-drum country town, like so many others. And yet I know that neither of these statements is true. I have become reconciled to the fact that no one here reads Hardy, just as I became accustomed after the first horror to find that no one who lives at Stratford-on-Avon reads Shakespeare, and that those who dwell in Beaconsfield care little for Burke and less for Disraeli; Barnes, to most Shertonians, connotes a cricketer rather than the poet who "made" the "Blackmoore Vaale," Dickens an old-fashioned, long-winded novelist much overrated.

I know that we labour under a severe handicap in being so isolated; we pay rates of over eight shillings in the pound and receive in return the inconveniences of mediævalism; but there is something in the atmosphere of Sherton that more than compensates for the incompetence of our present-day rulers—something quite extraordinarily hard to put on to paper, but which causes our faces to glow with an eagerness quite foreign to them anywhere else when, after a long day away from home, we first catch sight of the mist-covered town as we ride over the crest of the Marston Hill and are able to drink in her beauteous glory, as building after building unfolds itself to our gaze while

we draw gradually nearer down into the valley of the Yeo.

ii

Most significant of all our buildings and influences stands the abbey, a monument to man's pristine greatness, a keen corrective whenever one is worried by petty troubles. Simply to stand in front of the massive pile and gaze at the innumerable beauties of workmanship which have gone to the making of this wonderful "prayer and praise materialised" raises one out of the sordid routine and foolish babblings which form the lot of most of us for the greater part of our lives. So central, so imposing a figure it stands that it seems sometimes a sort of guardian angel, a sentinel over the town, keeping watch lest we should become contented, like the Man with the Muckrake, to look only in the mire for our heart's desire. I thank Providence that I have the privilege of living within reach of such an emblem of the loftiness of man's aim and the beauty of his execution. Man is no Yahoo if he can erect such testimonies as this to the glory of his Creator. Often I go to service there and drink in the glory and the magnificence of the pillars and roof, the play of the sunlight on the grey walls, the mystic charm of the soft evening light on the lofty heights and dim corners. Just as a hymn or psalm oftentimes makes a more direct, a more poignant appeal to your heart when you hear it while passing outside a chapel or a church than it does when you are among the congregation, so perhaps do the splendour and glory of an abbey like ours touch your inmost fibres to a truer response when you are to some degree apart from it, for we, of course, are not the

parishioners of this church. Our chapel, small and insignificant by contrast, lies alongside, so close that the cadences of the one reverberate through the walls and fall on the ears of the congregation in the other.

But it is not only the abbey which strikes so sympathetic a chord in the heart of anyone possessed of æsthetic taste. The almshouses, the castle (built by Queen Elizabeth for Sir Walter Raleigh), the old manor-houses in the outlying villages—all possess a glory which should keep our minds fresh and clean and alert if only we take the trouble to look at them. Visitors come and go, full of florid praises of what we have to show them, while we ourselves wonder what there is about the place that should be so desired, what beauty we cannot see that is—partially, at anyrate—revealed to babes and sucklings, sojourners of an hour. I suppose it was much the same at Oxford. We were being affected by the buildings all the time while we scarcely knew it, so now, only faintly realising the exquisite surroundings of our home, we are being imbued, without our knowledge, by the spirit of beauty.

Of entertainment, of outside life we get very little. My house is on the main London to Exeter road, which affords some pleasure, because I feel that the swiftly passing motor cars bring me into slight contact with the great world. The station is another favourite haunt when time hangs heavy on your hands and you are feeling unusually lonely and out of the world. Just to watch the expresses as they go through, with their tiny placards of Waterloo and Plymouth, brings those places nearer to you, and you constantly find yourself eyeing passengers with awe as they alight and saying under the breath: “Not three hours ago he (or she)

was in the streets of London ” ; some reflected glory seems to cling to you by reason of your proximity to them. The greatest excitement in leisure hours is to change the library books, throbbing with anticipation that “ that new novel may have come down even as far as this by now,” an anticipation only too often confounded by disappointment. There is (thank goodness) one book-shop in which we spend many more hours than pounds. The mere turning over of rare editions and good books which I cannot afford is such a joy. “ Now, if I knock off drinks for six weeks I shall be able to buy this. Is it worth it ? If I don’t smoke for a month I shall get it even sooner,” and so on. Pros and cons are weighed as if the world depended on it, and some wanton extravagance in book-buying on a wet day means poorer food and no new clothes. What a snare and a wile of the devil are these same books.

But this lack of entertainment and conviviality is entirely atoned for by the country in which I am driven to wander. Before I came to Wessex I thought I knew something of the changing glories of the seasons, but after two years here I now know that I did not. Lonely walks on Camelot Downs have bred in me a deeper and truer appreciation of Nature and of the poetry of outdoor life than I ever hoped to gain in this life. To sit still on a hedge and watch the kingfisher dive from the bank into the little brook over which he reigns is to sustain a glow of pleasure unknown to those who sit in stalls to watch the not more vividly coloured ballet of the music hall ; to loiter about in “ High Stoy ” in the hopes of seeing a badger, and to listen to the souging of the south-west wind in the trees and the falling of the water over the rocks is a finer sensation to the ear than

to listen to a concert in the Queen's Hall ; to taste the salt breezes and the sea-rain on Lyon's Head as they sweep up from Weymouth is a finer solace to a thirsty palate than the divinest of divine " beakers of Hippocrene " ; while simply to lie on the bare fields and gaze in silence on far-distant Glastonbury is to reconstruct and live poetry where before one had to read it at second-hand.

The petty scandal, the disgust felt at the aimlessness of much of life dies away in the gorgeous glow of exhilaration that creeps over me as, standing lonely on the hill-top, I descry on the far ridge the hounds of the Blackmore Vale hard upon the line of some fox which leads them nearer and ever nearer to the dense coverts that lie at my feet. Is there any music in the world more tunable than the horn mingle dwith the giving of tongue of a pack hot on the scent ? I think not. After days spent in the companionship of the wind upon the heath it is easy to come back home and wait, yea, and wait patiently, for that knock of the postman which is so eagerly looked for and yet so dreaded ; that knock which means so little to him, to me more bread, more honour or the alternative horror of another rejected manuscript.

XXI

SHERBORNE

SHERBORNE, the "Sherton Abbas" of Thomas Hardy, and the "scir burne" of the West Saxons, is situated in a most romantic valley on the main line of the London and South-Western Railway, surrounded on nearly every side by plentifully wooded slopes, which prevent any gales except those from the west from penetrating the quiet of its streets. Right in the midst of the town adjoining the north side of the abbey stands the school, founded by Edward VI., on the site of an old monastery which dates back to Alfred, so that education may be said to have held continuous sway here for close on thirteen hundred years, a fact on which townspeople and school alike are wont to pride themselves. But while the town has in many respects declined, the school has through the centuries gradually become more and more important. It is remarkable that the reputation for vigour and skill in games which Sherborne has rightly gained should have been achieved in spite of an enervating climate. It may be that the leaven of the Raleighs, Chichesters, Carews, Drakes, Hawkins and Frobishers, to mention but a few of the names to be seen in old school lists, has had an invigorating effect. Certainly, except for the exigencies of climate, those who are reared here have little to complain of. The secret glamour of tradition which has inspired so many in past ages is

all-powerful here on account of the ever-potent presence of the abbey, chapel, library, cloisters, court and hall, all full of old associations and beauty to the lover of the æsthetic. Not only is the school itself one mass of subtle beauties, of libraries and classrooms, flanked by the majestic flying buttresses of the abbey ; of dim, stout pillared cloisters, humanised by the shouts and scurrings of myriad boys ; of quaint mediæval studies, from which twinkle lights on autumn evenings, shedding their glow on the chestnuts and ash-trees, limes and beech-trees in the court ; and of noble Norman gateways and fourteenth-century oak-panelled rooms, but the whole country-side is studded with legendary gems. It would be hard on a May or June evening, while wandering through the park or meadows, to imagine a scene more typical of all that is best in English scenery.

In the train rushing from Waterloo to Plymouth, if you have the time or inclination to notice Sherborne at all, you will just remark on the cameo-like beauty of the setting, and it will be gone like the scent of sweet-brier in a deserted garden or the sight of hounds in the distance cresting a hill. It is not strange in the light of these circumstances that old Shirburnians should be so patriotic and devoted to their school. The sense of camaraderie is noticeable at once even to the stranger. This little commonwealth seems to have found the secret of making every member happy, and so, working as a harmonious entity, makes each boy look back on his schooldays at Sherborne as in reality the best days of his life. The different houses, of which there are six, are scattered all over the town, except for the school-house, which is twice the size of any other, and occupies

the buildings on the east and south of the great court. This means that at all hours of the day the straw hat (which is worn all through the year), with the different coloured ribbons for each house, may be seen in and about the streets, making the narrow, picturesque thoroughfares full of life and gaiety where they are normally empty and lifeless.

The distance from other great schools precludes a great number of inter-school matches which would otherwise be played, but in "Rugger" the school XV. oppose Tonbridge, Dulwich and the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and in cricket the XI. play Tonbridge, Dulwich and Radley.

Numbers of societies devoted to the cultivation of natural history, archæology, literature and debate flourish, foremost among which is "The Duffers," now entering upon its fiftieth term, boasting for its president, its founder, the Rev. H. R. King, and among its members Arthur Waugh and James Rhoades. Papers are read by members fortnightly on Sunday afternoons throughout the year, touching in the main on topics of literary interest. In addition to the readings there is also a play of Shakespeare acted at the end of every term. As there are only eight members and eight honorary members, it is looked upon as a high honour to be elected to this club. The "Sophists" Debating Society is open to the upper school, and, in addition to debates, modern plays are read to the extent of about three a term on Saturday evenings. Attendances vary from forty to eighty, according to the popularity of the subject.

The baths, which are open, large and very well equipped, fives courts, miniature rifle range, armoury,

chemical laboratory, art school and other new buildings are all on the west of the main block, separated by a road, so that it is possible to retain the sense of mediævalism with which you enter the small door in the wall called the Common-room gate, until you have explored the greater portion of the school. Undergraduates hot from Oxford invariably liken the south entrance to Merton, to which an especial likeness is lent by the shape of the abbey tower, which looms over and controls the rest of the buildings, much as Merton tower does, and is of the same stately four-square architecture.

The customs peculiar to the school are few. The prefect of the week introduces a special prayer in the middle of morning service daily, and is responsible for the lesson, unless it is a saints' day. In the schoolhouse most of the boys have studies, and in every house most of the senior boys share rooms in twos and threes. The juniors have a common-room, usually called a day-room, where they live for the most part as in a sort of club.

The rules in existence for house matches are rather intricate. Owing to the fact that the schoolhouse is twice the size of any other it obviously has to be handicapped. The question how has given rise to long and continued controversy. At present the two teams that have succeeded in getting into the final of the Junior combine to meet the school and house XV. in one competition. In the Senior the three best houses outside the schoolhouse are allowed to combine. These matches, which always arouse much excitement, are called "Two-Cock" and "Three-Cock."

Mr H. A. Vachell has pointed out in his novel of

Sherborne life one marked peculiarity of the town and school. Most of the houses have their frontage straight on the street, with the result, in many cases, that their gardens are far removed in another quarter of the town, but the lack of comfort consequent thereon is more than compensated for by the extreme wildness, beauty and size of them when you reach them. As might be expected, conversation is apt to turn more frequently than not on the subject of exotics and other growths, whether flowers, trees or shrubs. In such an atmosphere, surrounded by luxuriant gardens, by monumental piles of mediæval architecture, by the combined beauty of holiness and learning, constantly refreshed by the sight of history at its source, does the Sherborne boy grow up. He is to be envied not a little.

XXII

ROSSALL

*Here gat King Aethelstan
And eke his brother
Eadmund Aetheling
Life long glory
At sword's edge
Round Brunnanburh.*

PRESENT-DAY Rossallians, ambling along on house runs on wet afternoons towards "the House-on-the-Hill," rarely recollect, I imagine, that this building of Brune Hall, so well known as the only landmark within a mile or two to the east of the school, was probably the site of the most famous battle of Saxon days and perpetuates a feat of nearly a thousand years ago; but some of us who have let our imagination run riot as we pass panting by this "Bleak White House" live over again the fierce days that seem so close while we are here, where "once again the twilight foe, the vengeful fire-dragon vomiting forth his shield-destroying flames, devastates the country-side"; once more we wistfully gaze out over the "swan-road for a mighty deliverer who shall brandish his Hrunting and Naegling, trusty sword-edges, to rid us of our pest and arch-enemy the were-wolf."

Domesday Book commented on the "Desolation of the Fylde," and the Archbishop of York, only two

years ago, was more struck by our "bleak and wind-swept plain" than by any other natural feature of our surroundings: so our distinctive characteristics do not appear to alter much.

Nor do I think any advantage will be gained by dwelling too much on the past ages, as the surrounding country remains in its pristine condition of

"Wasted land and swampy pasture, trees bent double
by the wind,
Hedges wild and long-neglected, stagnant pools which
lifeless lie,"

as one of our own poets has recently expressed it. Ever since the days of Athelstan, so I take it, has the school an inherent "atmosphere" which "age cannot wither nor custom stale."

At first, for the purpose of this article, I procured all the early copies of *The Rossallian* (the first number appeared in March 1867, twenty-three years after the foundation of the school), but when in the fourth issue I lighted on an article on Female Suffrage I decided that the author of Ecclesiastes was right, and desisted from further delving. I propose, therefore, to treat of our life as we live it here and now, with but scant reference to the past.

True it is that none of the heroic deeds of the ages gone by seem to be emulated now, but that is probably because we stand too near the geniuses of to-day and cannot focus their deeds of derring-do aright.

Those of us who were lucky enough to be present either at the Jubilee dinner of 1894 or the O.R. dinner to commemorate the Coronation of George V. thrilled with pleasure to hear of the secret passages leading far

down the shore to where of old were pirates' caves ; of the ghost of Lady Fleetwood, who on certain nights again ascends the " Gazebo " with chains clanking on the stone stairs ; of " skeletons " made of something more useful than bones which permitted of midnight depredations at Thornton and Cleveleys ; of three-day fights in the old wreck barn—all these feats seem to be accomplishments of an era gone for ever : but that there are things we know not of as thrilling and as inspiring taking place in our midst now we doubt not.

We lament indeed that we could not be present when Queen Victoria heard an address from the captain of the school, that we missed the sight of Wordsworth when he visited Rossall ; but still there come nights in the summer when on Sunday we can come out from Evensong on to the sea-wall and, looking northwards, see the mystic hills of the Lake Country shrouded in the evening mists, for all the world like materialised " Dream Days." Yes, and there, " sure enough, lies the harbour, all thick with curly ships," the chimneys of Barrow only accentuating their charm ; westwards we turn out to sea and recognise the Isle of Man, after having strained for a view thereof perhaps as long as and with some of the keenness of Columbus or Cabot on their first voyage of adventure ; and reluctantly withdrawing our gaze towards the southern seas, sometimes we see the Great Orme's Head standing out like some huge iceberg turned black by the smoke of the northern factories ; then inland again, looking eastward, the evening lights may be seen over the waste flat lands away on the distant Yorkshire Wolds of Ingleborough and Ingleton.

No school, in England at any rate, can boast of

scenery at once so desolate and so magnificent, so friendly and hopeful in the cheerful summer days, or so inimical in its capricious springtime. April rarely "laughs her girlish laughter," but "the moment after" the floods descend and beat down mercilessly on our fastness, and the hurricane, now mournfully keening, now hysterically shrieking its dirge over its lost lover the sun, in its wrath seizes on tiles and sand-dunes, books and hats, all moving and malleable, animate and inanimate forces that oppose it, and crushes them in a senseless frenzy of revenge, inconsequentially, haphazard. It is this environment that produced the typical Rossallian temperament.

Character is bound to be formed in such an atmosphere on different lines from that which emanates from the languorous, seductive river towns of the south: indefatigable energy, ability to bear the buffets and the slings of adverse fortune lightly, and an optimism founded on realities are among the obvious results.

Certainly it fills us with an unholy joy to read of depredations committed on the headmaster's house in 1850 by rash Alpinists in embryo who were discovered descending from the roof of Rossall Hall armed with edible trophies, and suffered physically and mentally therefrom for some time after. We tingle with delight at the thought of a former headmaster being so acute that he could construe Theocritus, catch a member of his form (behind him, of course) cribbing by means of convenient refracting spectacles, and by the aid of his highly polished boots get, by looking down, glimpses of other boys surreptitiously ragging on his half-left and half-right, all at the same time. Much should we like to have been in a dormitory at a time when guns were

served out to every cubicle one night to repel a suspicious-looking craft which had been "in the offing" all day, and was supposed to be the first vessel of a Fenian navy. We should not have relished the concomitant cattle-truck of that era, however, by which Fleetwood was reached in the winter terms, and we can only pause to wonder at the temerity of the first instigators of the idea of building a school here if they had the doubtful good fortune to encounter a "typical Rossall day" while they were "cogitating on its feasibility."

The new era began under the leadership of Doctor James, who was headmaster from 1875 to 1886: he it was who created the "house" system, without which no school can hope to live in any sense of cohesion or to progress. Such a step as this did not immediately commend itself to the school at large (innovations are nearly always unpopular, even now, incredible as it may appear), and seething discontent marred his first year's headmastership. But this was not the only reform of moment (gigantic as it was) that we owe to him: he founded the "Monis' Li.," house rooms, which are in reality social clubs to which prominent members of a house are elected, and the Singing Competition, now one of the most popular events of the year, when houses send in a quartet and octet to sing for a Cup presented by him, and individuals compete for a broken and unbroken voices' prize. This always produces the keenest excitement, and the winners invariably are really able singers: of our music at any rate we have no reason to be ashamed. In Sweeting, Lloyd and James we had men who sowed seed the benefit of which we are beginning now very thankfully to reap.

Our lament rather is that time is so much given to this that none has as yet been found for a dramatic society; when we read of the Bradfield and Westminster plays, to mention but two of the better known, we are seized for the moment by a sort of frenzy or irritation: it is in reality so easy and yet so essential that boys should be given a chance to develop their histrionic talents.

We have a Debating Society whose meetings are not well attended (probably because they take place during the precious hours of lock-up), and "Enters" occur about three times a term, but a school play is as yet, except for the "Monis' Reading," an unknown factor of our life, and much do we regret it. That and the fact that we play only one school (Stonyhurst) at "footer" and but two (Loretto and Shrewsbury) at cricket are the only important features of our present-day life which obviously call for instant reform.

In our games, apart from this, we envy no one. Our peculiar game of hockey has been instrumental in producing such a list of internationals that it would be invidious to begin to name them. It is played on the shore (obviously in "gym." shoes) with a stick that more resembles the uncouth weapon employed by farmers than a rational hockey-stick, and is, as the rule-book has it, "essentially a dribbling game: a game not of passing, not of hitting, but of skill in dribbling and steadiness in following up. Except in the case of the packed bully every rule of it is designed to prevent any kind of force." Of late years there has been a tendency to add a dash of the brusquer methods of rugger into it, introduced by members of Common-room who find it hard to break themselves of the evil

habits of their early years ; but stringent refereeing may even yet bring back the game to its original state, as explained above, of being essentially a game for the skilful dribbler. One quality, however, is demanded before all, and that is absolute fitness and a superb wind : the backing up in the bully all over the field, following the ball at the distance of not more than a yard for not less than seventy minutes, is, to use a euphemism for it, gruelling. All the bully have to keep together and, as in rugger, no forward pass is allowed : this it is that necessitates the constant rush up and down the field *sans intermission* for the whole game. It is true only eight of the eleven form the bully ; the back has to possess the qualifications required in soccer hockey ; the other two, called "flies," act in the capacity of "halves," and are chosen for their speed, tackling propensities and skill in dribbling, and are the most frequent scorers. In a game like this it is quite customary to play a House match and not score at all in the hour ; it is no unusual thing, in fact, for final House matches to be replayed twice. The excitement the game produces among spectators may perhaps be best gauged by this. Other rules that differentiate the game from hockey proper are that no player may play with his stick on the left side, nor may he play the ball or stop it with the wrong side of the stick, the hook of which must always be turned outwards ; neither is any obstruction of any opponent in the way of hooking allowed.

This game is played in the Easter term whenever the tide permits (it is essentially a game for bad weather)—that is, about seven days out of sixteen. On the other days House runs and paper chases (which are now

compulsory) get men fit for the hockey House matches and the sports. The country is very nearly ideal for cross-country work : there are dykes more often than not unfordable in every field, notably " Jack Bacchus," the difficulties of thickset hedges to be surmounted, and lots of plough ; the one drawback is the lack of hills. We have no annual long run as Sedbergh, Malvern and Rugby have, and must content ourselves with an extremely dull, easy field steeplechase of two and a half miles, which is, of course, invariably a gift for the winner of the one- and two-mile races on the track.

House sports, too, which are so obviously an incentive to keen competition, are as yet only a vision of the mind, but will, in all probability, be introduced in the near future. On the other hand, rugger, which but recently was looked on askance, has gained a firm hold on the majority, and is played weekly with extreme vigour, if not with great skill, by about a hundred of the keener spirits. The prep. school have definitely taken it up as their Easter term game and are becoming extraordinarily good.

Owing to the wind which usually rages over the ground both in rugger and soccer, control in kicking is apt to become with us a specialised feature, and causes us perhaps to be proficient in one department of the game to the detriment occasionally of other things.

In games of less import it seems a pity that with a racquets court at our command we cannot make more of the game. That is due, we are told, to the " slowness " of the court : we hope, however, to see this remedied in the only way possible soon.

In swimming we are looking forward to a great

improvement, as next summer will find us provided with an open-air bath on "Sandy ói" of the extraordinary dimensions of 170 feet by 120. This is costing us £2000, raised entirely by voluntary subscription, and old Rossallians and friends are earnestly looked to for their most generous support. The present baths have done the school some service, having been in use since 1865, but they are under a cover which is quite beyond repair.

The "Gym. Eight" is not so proficient as it ought to be, and we have of late not done ourselves justice at Aldershot, but boxing is becoming much more popular year by year, and soon we may well hope to be successful in the Public Schools competitions, which up to this year have practically left us cold.

But of all affairs that occupy our attention out of school easily first stands "The Corps." This may be due partly to the fact that we were the first school corps to be enrolled, but there is a deep-rooted tradition that we stand or fall by our O.T.C., and we do not appear to be falling as yet. We have been through some vicissitudes: in 1860 we were known as the 65th Lancashire R.V., in 1876 we were altered to H. Coy. 10th L.R.V., and in 1883 to H. Coy. 1st Vol. Batt. King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment; later (in 1890) we became an Engineer Corps, and now, with record numbers, we form three companies of the Officers' Training Corps.

The Ashburton Shield has been ours, and ought to be again. We have won the *Country Life* Miniature Rifle Competition with a score of 606 (ten points ahead of our nearest rival), but on this occasion we were unlucky enough to be disqualified for a

“pull-off” of $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. under weight, a purely formal disqualification.

So keen is the corps spirit that again and again we hear from visitors the phrase “barracks” applied to our life. Sergeants appear on every possible pretext. A “Gunts” to see that we throw no missiles in the Square and are not peculiarly in a state of undress at the chapel door or late for services or meals; a “Gunts” to take “P.S.” and “Drill”; a “Gunts” to tell us “The ’eadmaster wishes to see you, sir!”; a “Gunts” to teach us signalling; a “Gunts” for the recruits, for “P.T.” (the new form of gym. compul.), for boxing, for fencing, for handing “Roll Lists” to “unique, indigenous nixes” on duty, for the giving out of parcels and the reporting of the sick, for teaching swimming—in fact, for all the necessities of daily life. Even our artist in hairdressing, one of the few real artists among us, is commonly known as “the Colonel.” The military spirit is indeed fostered within our walls, and those who are not keen on the corps are few and of no reputation.

Nearly every “nix” is, or has been, an officer or in the ranks: numbers of the school appear to live only for camp at Tidworth or Aldershot, and the Terminal Field Days with Stonyhurst, Giggleswick and Sedburgh are looked forward to more than any other function of the school year; the range (some 300 yards from the school) appears never to be vacant, and when that is not available the baths are employed for a miniature range. Secret messages from friend to friend call for no note of hand: the rawest “pint” signals his urgent call by semaphore or Morse. Buglers may be seen on every “cop” and heard from the “Wreck” to the “Landmark” at all times of the day

and night; "nagging" drum noises rouse us from our "Snob. Prep." industry or slumbers nearly every evening; we bathe in the sea to the accompaniment always of a kettledrum practised by some neophyte, keen and noisome; scouts and signallers leap out at us from "butts" and hedges down "the Lane" when we endeavour to get away to some peaceful, retired corner for the afternoon; and even at night we are not immune: looking out into the blackness of a winter night we hear some stealthy, creeping form panting across the grass outside our study window, followed by weird calls and terrifying whistles. There is no real cause for alarm; it is only the night scouts. But even in "dormi." we are still military: candidates for "Certificate A" will puzzle out martial problems till and after "lights out," defending their theories not only with interest but with acrimony, and the nearly always concomitant physical strength necessary for positive proof.

With so much time spent on it, therefore, it is not remarkable that the Corps House Competition is more arduously trained for than any other. Every day for six weeks the House Section is drilled into shape and skirmishing practice is taken at every available opportunity. These opportunities are, as a matter of fact, very rare; only too little time occurs for anyone to undertake any extraneous business outside the ordinary routine, partly owing to the system of "Study Preps." In addition to "Long Prep." from 7.20 to 8.25 every night, there are in studies "preps." from 9-9.45, 4-4.30, and 9-10 P.M. People, therefore, who indulge in "private tuition" between twelve and one find that days pass into weeks and weeks into months and the

term is at an end before they have had time to fulfil any of the interesting schemes they formulated for themselves. The sad part of this is that no one seems to find time to read or to think, even if he were encouraged to. "The Sumner" is a trifle forbidding on its literary side, but every House room is stocked with just the books most people want later on to have read, but have, as they put it, "no longer the time," whereas, if they spoke truly, it was when they were young here that they had no time.

How a present-day "pint" manages to get through his day is a marvel. He is obviously in a low form and possessed of no great intelligence, yet he has to satisfy all sorts of standards of work which to him seem ridiculously high, and which call down upon him threats, "sacs," N.S.'s, P.S.'s, "drills" and "biffings" every hour. He probably starts the day by being "turned" before "John's Bell," which causes him to be late for chapel, which leads to a fracas with the Gunts and "one drill"; he tries to put in a "cocoa" before "first," and finds himself late again; the odds are on his being "sacked" in form, and immediately before and after breakfast cries of "F-a-a-a-a-g!" will effectually prevent his having any time to himself. After "third" he will either be "sacked" to school nets fielding, or have "physical nagging," as he calls "P.T.," or recruit drill till dinner. At two he is certain to be in "drill" and on a net or House game or run till 3.30, when he will be again likely to be "sacked" to the "tuck." From four till seven he has no moment to spare, and then he has to be out at House fielding till prep., followed by chapel and "Late Prep." His only possible recreation and pause is his bath night, to which

he naturally looks forward with more than the ordinary relish of coming cleanliness : it is a respite (short, indeed, but blessed), but he will have to do the work supposed to be done at that time somewhere, somehow. Then he has little chance of getting off to sleep at all before eleven, even had he the inclination. A busy day, forsooth, whose slackest hours are easily those spent in school. On "Halves" he is certain to be in "Puni." for two hours, and on "Quarter Halves" to be "sacked" for some "Moni's Brew."

Only on Sundays does the "pauper" get a chance. Just from twelve to one and two to four, if he is lucky enough to escape the vigilant eye, can he vanish with a rug to "Sandy Hoy" or a neighbouring "cop" and read and sleep and slack. Even then he is generally employed in "stubbing" his weaker brethren or getting done some of the more danger-threatening "sacs" that haunt his peace of mind.

"Sacking" here is nearly synonymous with "keeping" at Cambridge : it takes the place of a vocabulary : it means to send catches at "House fielding," to send anyone anywhere for any purpose ; it means to punish, to be expelled, to have your work turned ; it is like the "Ubique" of Mr Kipling.

But if this is the "pauper's" life, what of the "Moni's" ? His day's work would startle even so strenuous and untiring a man as "Mr Marlowe of the Mail." He rises at 6.30, or earlier, in order to finish some form or scholarship work before morning chapel at 7.10. He will take his team out "House fielding" between breakfast and first "prep." After "3rd school" he may, if lucky, find time to read the paper for five minutes before he goes on "school nets."

After lunch, between 2 and 3.35, he may be required for the range, to play in a House match, to write up some accounts for the *Ross.*, or go through the House library requirements or House room minutes. He has one short spasm of content in "tea-rooms" at the "tuck" before starting work again at 4 P.M. From then till 11 P.M. his time is rarely his own. Even in chapel it may be his turn to read the lessons, or in "prep." to take "roll," in addition to his own work. On the top of this is his "dormi. duty," so that he drops off to sleep shortly after eleven, dog-tired, having accomplished about one-tenth of the things that he thought inevitable and imperative when he got up.

Yet the "Moni." has his privileges: he may go to "Blacker" or "Flood" with verbal permission of the "head"; he has his own private lawn on which he may play tennis, and on which only he and his kind are allowed to walk; he may "cut" tea and stroll about in "Long Prep."; he may sit up till eleven, a thing he rarely has the inclination to do; he has his own library and his peculiar seat in chapel—he has, in fact, everything except that which he most craves—that is, time: time to read, time to write, time to think, yes, even sometimes time to slack.

It is not as if Sunday were a day of rest: if it happen to be a "half" he may have to walk to Wardley's (that time-honoured spot on the Wyre where roll on these occasions is held), call on the Thornton Marshes and the O.P.T., and get back just in time to see his "fags" rushing from "Brew-stoves" back to his "Study Brew" with all his cooked delicacies and "scanties"; ensues a hurried meal and a hasty digestive ascent of the "Gazebo" to get some air before evening chapel,

and then a brief respite of "lock-up" or "lock-out" (according to the weather) before "Long Prep."

Neither do the "nixes" have entire freedom in the evening, for there are "Snob Prep.," "Big Prep.," and "Pints' Prep." all going on simultaneously, each requiring one man on duty.

Many O.R.'s will hear with sadness that no longer are fags called from the "phugs" for House Room singing, that splendid function where all "oycks" were "stubbed" or "clewed" or "biffed" into sense.

Nowadays all is quiet during these lock-up times, save for the occasional "Right!" as a door opens and the cry of "F-a-a-a-g!" followed by the frenzied rush of many feet along the flags towards the House Room.

Perhaps the more terrible sound of a good "rux" for failing to bring a "pyx of throdkin" or "half-tuppenny" from "Ma" Ross earlier in the day will break the stillness, but, generally speaking, life is quieter and perhaps happier for "Mod. I." than in the days of yore.

On Saturday nights only during "Play Prep." is there still found time for such amusements as "the Mu" or "the Ob" or the "R.P.S.," and there has of late been such a "bully" at the former that other societies, chess and Shakespearean, have had to be formed to take some of the great number that go neither to choir practice, nor "Certificate A" class, nor any of these.

The surrounding country is rarely seen except on Field Days and N.H.S. expeditions, but Shard Bridge, Stalmine, Height o' th' Hill, Little Bispham, Pennyquick Stone, the Submerged Forest and Cockleham Marsh are still names to conjure with, and not only bring

back memories of great days past, but hopes of those to come. Few will forget last year's camp at Parrax Hall or their many visits to Preesall.

Runs from time immemorial have gone over "the cop," through Porter's Field, by Thornton Church, to "the Ramper," and back by the Windmill, not missing out "Jack Bacchus" (still very popular in White's), and will continue to do so as long as legs remain and energy exists.

"Nixes" seem still to prefer to amble gently past Larkholme to the Landmark, presumably to worship at the shrine of "Plucky" Bateman, whose feat is certainly not forgotten yet.

Nor need the "*laudator temporis acti*" bemoan the drastic changes that seem to have been effected of recent years: there are some things that have been always with us and are not likely to disappear in our era, such as "turning" before "John's Bell" (already referred to), at which Mas C. and Y. may weep, but it seems as essential to our life as "Swipes" were to our forerunners and "Wet Prayers" still on a stormy night. It is not as if the "Dac" were needed after such delights—— But I must stop. I have talked at too great length and too much at random of superficial things and omitted the greater things, simply because I have not the words to convey, nor the inclination publicly to proclaim, all that Rossall means to us.

We are, as it were, a monastery set far down on a desolate coast, removed from the great world, and comprise a little cosmos of our own of which we are so inordinately proud that we have to talk glibly of lesser things for fear of vainglorying and boastful speech. Rossall is not easy to know, and years have to pass in

which one changes from careless hatred to a desperate love.

Well may she say with the poet: "To know me and to love me may be a liberal education, but you must do your part and you will find it hard: I have none of the obvious, the ravishing charms of Devon or the South: you will have to overcome difficulties innumerable, but when you are mine you will wish to forsake me for none; I shall be your life-blood, your mistress, and your one safe anchor in the world. To me will you turn as partaker of your joys and sympathiser with your sorrows; you will find in me at last the companion that your heart has ached for so long, and when the long years have gone by and the work that you have set yourself to do is finished, I shall remain a monument of what you made me and a memorial of what I made you."

XXIII

BY MOTOR COACH TO BRIGHTON

I MISSED the six-thirty-five train to Brighton and had to wait at Victoria for two hours for the next. As this train contained a Pullman car, I decided to dine on that to while away the tedium of the journey. My first-class ticket was a needless expense. The only dining-cars were third-class, and there was a rush for seats half-an-hour before we were due to leave. I found myself wedged in between a tightly closed window and a very fat woman, who alternately hiccupped, sneezed and yawned in the intervals of eating.

The feathers in her hat were—unfortunately for me—on the wrong side. They toyed with my fish, flirted recklessly with my mutton, flicked gravy on my neck and collar, and swept across my cheeks like strands of bedewed cobweb. All this I could have borne, in spite of the suffocating heat, but for over two hours the air was corroded by the most peculiarly pungent scent it has ever been my lot to inhale. I hate scent on any woman. A small child opposite yelled at the top of its voice until nine-forty. I arrived in Brighton bruised by the sharp elbow of my scented neighbour, ill with the heavy sweetness of the odour, my head racking, my nerves jangled.

On Friday I decided to try another route. At five-fifty-six P.M. I was hoisted into the front seat next

the driver of one of the Samuelson Company's motor coaches. By six o'clock I was wondering why I had thought the day to be so hot. By six-thirty I was lost in admiration at the skilful way in which my rubicund chauffeur was threading his way past trams and omnibuses and multitudes of cyclists.

The road to Croydon gives one an idea that cannot be attained in any other way of the vast hordes that inhabit London. My left-hand neighbour had been hitherto as uncommunicative as a fellow-traveller by train, but the green hedges of Purley, the end of the tram lines, the open country and the distant hills were too much for him. The flood-gates of his tongue were loosened.

My driver had a jest ready for every policeman that we passed, and every passing *char-à-banc*, of which there were hundreds. A faint desire to drink came over me : we pulled up at the Chequers, Horley. How different this old posting-house was from the odorous refreshment-rooms at the railway stations.

The driver showed me a photograph of Illuminator. The owner of that fortunate horse also owned that fortunate house situated exactly half-way between London and Brighton. The return to the road must be making him as happy as his horse's victory. Not only was his bar full, but there were visitors dining on the old-world lawn, and private cars indicative of great wealth stacked in the yard as if it were a race meeting.

We drove on refreshed past the historic George at Crawley to the top of Handcross Hill, where for the first time we saw the noble, bare outline of the sweeping Downs in front. The driver began to talk about himself. "Sometimes I do the journey four times a

day," he said; "sixteen hours of it; but I like it. We are given a free hand." I thought of engine-drivers, of other transport workers, of miners, and wondered what they would say to a sixteen-hour day. My friend was as cheery and as full of quips and oddities as a Dickensian coachman. The influence of the road on the temperament seems sweetening and wholesome. My man had no grievances. Suddenly he gave a loud guffaw. I descried a motor car broken down just in front. We stopped to proffer help. "It's Mutt and Jeff," he said. "Two of the best."

We slipped easily down between the Downs at Newtimber to Patcham and Preston, and suddenly an excited multitude cried out involuntarily: "The sea! The sea!" The journey had taken us three and a quarter hours, every moment of which was enjoyable. It was a holiday in itself, healthy, full of variety, whetting the appetite for more.

There are many ways in which the new method of travel scores over the old. I am not commonly seen off in person by the directors of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway when I leave Victoria. I do not even know the stationmaster by sight. But on Friday night Mr Samuelson bade me an affectionate adieu; he seemed to take a personal interest in all of us.

XXIV

THE COMING OF SPRING

AS soon as I woke in the early morning I knew that something had happened. The restlessness which I felt in my bones was being shared by the birds in the garden, the wind in the trees, and by the small grey and white scurrying clouds which momentarily obscured the sun's most rare, but all the more welcome, glory; the whole southern sky was touched with the very finger of dawn. At last! The coming of Spring! Never have I so desired winter to end as I have desired the end of this one; I care not at all whether the young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love; I only know that it brings back sweetness and light, the ecstatic longing to be up and doing, to drink in every drop of beauty which Nature now so wantonly, so prodigally, lavishes on her blind, ungrateful sons. I want to create, to spend myself, to live my life to the full, to shake off the dull listlessness of winter and to get into touch again with the immensities of sea and air and earth and sky.

All the morning I chafe at my prison bars, in chapel, where the dancing specks of dust, rainbow-coloured through the old stained glass, first tortured me with their gay irresponsibility; in form, where my chalk-drawn tangents and segments, meticulously correct, suddenly, by reason of a flash of sunshine across the blackboard, looked lifeless and without meaning;

ater, while trying to inspire a love for Shelley into a class of so-called really intellectual youths, a lark chose to trill in the field beyond my northern windows and I could not choose but hear. How futile mere words sounded after the first sound of the swiftly rising birds struck on our ears ; I cursed the four bare, ugly walls that bounded my horizon, and prayed for my release.

At twelve-thirty I was free to leave my room, but only to instruct my platoon in the mechanic art of musketry. Not until one-fifteen was I able to seize my bicycle, unkennel my wire-haired terrier, into whose veins Spring had already pumped some even more than wonted energy, and fly for the distant village of Purse Caundle, where the hounds were advertised to meet. About half-an-hour later, having rescued Plato (we call him that owing to his dislike of music) from imminent destruction as he swayed perilously over a yawning chasm in his chase after a rabbit, I met, to my dismay, three much-bespattered riders returning from the hunt ; to my perfervid inquiry as to where the hounds were I was gruffly informed, " Oh ! miles away by this time." Notwithstanding this set-back, I pedalled on, dishevelled, panting, tired, only eager to get a smell of the pack before dusk.

As luck would have it, after two miles' further climb, I encountered on the top of the downs a lonely but gloriously communicative Diana, whose muddy state only enhanced the glowing beauty of her face : veritably, Spring incarnate she seemed to me up on that hill-side with the fresh south wind blowing her errant curls caressingly about her cheeks. Somehow her deep grey eyes, deep like a mountain tarn, as they laughingly told me that my quest was at an end, seemed to make

her one with the landscape ; the whole air was one soft harmony of singing creatures praising God for Spring, and this slender, laughing young goddess became for me the embodiment of Ertha, the mother of all, ever young, with the promise of all joy and fruition of joys writ large upon her face.

In a moment she was gone, in a flash, like a rainbow, dissolving into the very elements. I stood, transformed, waiting, I scarcely knew for what, Plato at heel, when far below in the valley I heard the nerve-thrilling "toot-toot" of the horn and the sound, first of one, then of another, lastly of all the pack together, of the hounds giving tongue. They were coming towards me. Suddenly a stealthy swish through the undergrowth and a great dog fox leisurely, with brush outstretched, made for the open moor ; not a moment too soon ; a great black-and-tan hound, almost Cerberus-like in stature, burst out upon him, and away sped the pair over the horizon ; ten seconds, twenty, passed, and then the pack came up, were laid on, followed by a field of fair ladies whose bright eyes were bent now upon nothing but the prize they had searched for so much in vain. Diana once more flitted across my vision, with just a nod of recognition and a laugh that made my face flush and my heart stand still for a moment, only to beat a million to the minute a moment later.

Throwing my bicycle to the winds, Plato straining in leash almost to bursting point (his, not the chain's), I fled, miles in rear, after the field ; over the topmost ridge, down into the farther fields, through wood and stream, over furrow and upland, my heart throbbing louder and louder for another reason now, ever within

sound, never within sight of the chase. Forced at last to rest, I chose a gate which commanded a view of miles of the brave downland country.

No sound of horn or hound nor clatter of horses' feet reached my ears, strain them as I would every way. Plato, to his unbounded joy released, sped fast in the direction which they had taken some half-hour before. The first hedge, however, provided him with sport enough, for no sooner had I spied him hurling himself through the undergrowth than I saw a long grey fox slink away on the farther side. "A hunt on his own." . . . Too good, this, to be resisted: with one yap of triumph Plato rushed madly in the rear, only to disinter yet another, only less small, from some bracken midway across the field. Whistle, shout, swear as I did, nothing was going to spoil his hunt now. Away, field upon field he crossed, vainly yapping, hot upon the scent. "You brute, you brute," I found myself almost whimpering. I got on my bicycle and with a last despairing whistle turned homeward. I forget how long after, but I remember dismounting to look back once more on the hill where the vision of Diana had appeared to me, when I saw cowering at my feet a cringing terrier, full of guilt, his brown eyes imploring mercy. "Heaven and earth, dog!" I cried, "it's only the Spring. Shall I be punished for gazing on Diana or the beauty of an English landscape? If I beat you for fulfilling your nature, when the whole wild blood of Spring is heating in your veins, would my hand be accursed for evermore? Get up, fight every dog you see, chase every cat, worry every rat; I'll not interfere. Lawlessness, Plato mine, full-blooded lawlessness, that's what this day's outing breeds in us.

Come, let us sing." And sing we did, to the great terror of a lonely old woman gathering sticks by the roadside :

" ' It's only the coming of Spring, Mother,
Only the coming of Spring, ' "

I shouted as I passed.

" Eh ! yer may sing, lad, sing while yer may ; there's a mort o' sorrow comin' for yer, lad, sing while yer may. "

I did.

An hour later I was in school, toga-clad, civilised, doling out a punishment, quite out of proportion to the offence, to an unfortunate Lower School child who had dropped his pencil twice in five minutes.

No sun now impeded my labours ; my circles in the gaslight looked solid and comforting, my quadratic equations a testament to the solidity of life as we live it, my sonnet of Keats a wonderful if somewhat exaggerated view of nature. Dinner was not far off, and rest, and bed . . . and yet . . . and yet . . . Oh, Diana, Diana, what have you done to me ?

XXV

HUNTING ON FOOT IN LINCOLNSHIRE

HUNTING the fox on foot is not popular. I have been out with the Blankney not less than once, frequently twice, a week all through one season, and I have never once had a companion. There have been half-a-dozen followers on bicycles on an average, three or four cart-loads of ladies at their ease, and between eighty and a hundred mounted men and women. The sport has been consistently good. I have not experienced a single blank day, scarcely one without a kill, and whenever there has been a run to the death I have managed to be there in time for the final "Who-whoop!"

Nearly every sane Englishman has the lust of the chase in his blood; countless generations of hunting sires have contributed to this, and it is absurd that one should have to forgo one of the chief of life's pleasures through lack of means. We have, it is true, a pack of beagles, but they meet only twice a week, and one of those days happens to be inconvenient for me, so I found myself perforce bound to run after the fox to satiate my thirst for the king of sports. It is possible to get to nearly all the meets either by train, walking or bicycling. Four egg sandwiches, an orange and a banana in the pocket and you can last from eight-o'clock breakfast till five-o'clock tea, with a thirty-mile run thrown in, easily.

It is a good thing to discard all irrelevant weight ; woollen underclothing, yes ; you may have to wait at covert-sides for an hour or more, and chills are easy to catch, hard to dispel ; a light shirt, silk if possible, thorn-proof knickerbockers, football stockings, light walking shoes which fit perfectly, flannel coat and waistcoat (it is false economy to shed one's waistcoat), loose-fitting silk collar and tie, hat or not as you please, pockets empty of all save pipe and tobacco for the homeward journey, handkerchief and a little money. Be sure to give yourself ample time to get to the meet a quarter of an hour before the advertised time. This gives you the chance to see the hounds come up, one of the finest sights in a world full of beauty, to talk to friends, to find out where they are likely to draw, to let the eye dwell lovingly on the horses and the well-knit, trim and neat riders. Don't accept any invitation to eat and drink before you start. Your job is to keep with the hounds ; you can drink and smoke afterwards. When they go for the first covert, don't wait on the roadside, even if it seems to be a good vantage-point and attracts the three or four score other foot-people. Go with the riders—keep as close to them as you can.

With the Blankney we nearly always get a fox at the first cast. The probability is that you will be close enough to see her steal away—another quite unforgettable sight ; you then watch the pack laid on and the field thundering after them. You can give yourself up to the sheer joy of watching that first wild rush of figures in pink and black sailing like swallows over the thorns and away across the valley. For a whole minute you can photograph the panorama on your mind ; not longer, or you will be left. Then after them

you must go, watching carefully the thin line of white and brown dots of hounds in front; they are sure to turn right- or left-handed, so that you may cut corners judiciously. Keep on running; a jog-trot will do—never walk—never race. Four miles an hour is too slow; ten miles an hour just too fast. You ought to keep up an average speed of from six to eight miles an hour to keep them near enough to you all day.

It may be that you will break your heart in the first run—wisdom only comes through experience—but if the whole field disappears from view there are still the second horsemen to come. When they catch you up, try to keep pace with them, and you will find that the leaders will come back to you. You have to know your country, of course; notice which way the wind is blowing—the fox will come down wind in the end; remember how the coverts lie. Listen for the sound of galloping hoofs on roads, of the huntsman's horn, of "view-halloas," of hounds giving tongue, and don't be misled by the whistles of trains. Notice which way the cars and bicycles are going; you have far too much to do ever to realise your tiredness. A glow of pride will surge through you as you pick up the line, following the tracks of horses, making for the spot crossed by belated riders whose horses are refusing. . . . With all the signs strewn about you must indeed be a fool if you let them escape you altogether. It may be half-an-hour, it may even be an hour that you wander helplessly, scanning the horizon in vain. Don't give it up. Keep a stout heart and all will be well. A dark wood very far distant, a faint, very faint blast is wafted back to you on the breeze, something moving—a white blob, then another . . . now you can use up some of your

reserve energy ; away you go, leaping hedges, jumping water-brooks, ankle-deep in plough, your feet lightly, swiftly speeding over mossy turf, the sweet smell of early spring in your nose . . . breathless, sweating, but happy, you catch them up. "I wish I had your legs," says one sportsman appraisingly ; "or your wind," says another. You blush with pride. You lean up against the hedge and recover your breath . . . the fox again breaks and off you go again, determined this time not to lose sight of them for the rest of the day. The fox too feels tired. You can share his feelings better than anyone else there ; you know what it means to be hunted. He has had enough of the open country ; you are held up by another covert. "Leu-in-there-leu-leu-leu !" shouts the huntsman. First one hound, then another gets the line. . . . The noise becomes louder and louder ; again they drive the hunted thing out . . . you catch up this time to find that the fox has gone to ground. For the respite you are profoundly thankful ; not so the less fatigued riders. In ten minutes or less the terrier has ousted him once more, a sharp burst—three minutes, perhaps five—and the hounds have pulled him down in the open ; and you have seen it all. It is amazing how you can keep going when you are actually on the line of the fox. You are likely to get distressed and inclined to search for the nearest inn when the huntsman is merely drawing one covert after another, and you have to run in their wake for three or four miles knowing that there is no fox being chased ; that really is a gruelling sweat, but it has to be done. There will be another run ere the day is out . . . and tiredness is a purely relative thing—at half-past one you feel incapable of covering another

foot of ground ; at twenty to three you are sailing along over an eight-mile point without the slightest trouble, keen only on viewing the fox and being in at the kill.

It is quite on the cards that you will be up for the second kill if only you can forget yourself. After all, the changing scenery counts for something. In the Blankney country you may begin in the fens, with only black, flat plough to cross and water dykes to jump ; an hour later you may be on the bare, open uplands of the heath, in the stone-wall country, running over springy turf and dried grass ; the late afternoon may see you in the vale with thick hedges and small grass fields. . . . There is endless variety in Lincolnshire. . . . Comes half-past four and most of the field have gone home ; hounds are drawn off—you at last break into an easy walk ; a rider catches you up. “ I don’t know how you do it,” he says. “ You must have the heart of a lion—‘ *Cœur de Lion* ! ’ ” Is there higher praise than this ? . . . and the man on the tired horse means it. Not least among the joys of the day is that saunter back to the place where you left your bicycle. Now you can smoke ; now you can drop into any way-side inn for tea . . . and what a tea ! . . . Is there any meal in the world comparable with that which follows a hard day out with the hounds ? It isn’t that you eat much . . . it is the blessed sense of complete peace that comes with the tiredness . . . the peace of the waning day as you wander along the Roman lanes or across the fields, hares scurrying from under your feet, pheasants and partridges scuttling skywards at your approach . . . eerie noises from the woods, the friendly greetings of passing farm labourers—and then the sight of the lights of home . . . a steaming-hot

bath . . . and then the reconstruction of the day's exploits to one's own folk . . . dozing in front of the fire after dinner while someone plays and sings, and an early bed.

If there is any finer way of spending a day I should like to hear of it—and it costs nothing. It is within the reach of almost anyone. All that is required is a sound heart, a good pair of legs, a fair wind and plenty of determination.

XXVI

THE DEADLINESS OF MARKET TOWNS

INSPIRATION suddenly failed me this morning. I turned from the play that I was writing to a short story that I had left unfinished: the characters were all on strike and refused to function. In despair I attacked my new novel . . . something had gone wrong. In the end I gave it up and tortured a golf-ball. At lunch my wife said: "I'm going into Fordcombe to shop this afternoon; you, of course, will be writing."

"No," I said. "I'll come too."

"You'll be bored to death," she answered.

"Perhaps," I replied.

I have a feeling that all market towns of four or five thousand inhabitants resemble one another.

When we arrived I saw that the cinema was open.

"I'll try this," I said.

"I'll meet you in two hours," said my wife.

I met her in two minutes. The picture house was open certainly, presumably to let the stale air out: the *matinée* that was advertised was for two days earlier or four days in front. I elected not to wait. I entered a shop in the wake of my wife. There was a queue of three. "This won't take long," I thought.

Twenty minutes later I decided to wait outside: I had exhausted the delights provided by the local railway guide, a variety of slates, fifteen hectically coloured,

hectically worded post cards, and Weldon's patterns of the past decade. I stood at the door of the shop and watched the passers-by. The queer thing was that so few passed by. There were quite a number of people about, but they nearly all stood still. They were mainly occupied in pivoting about their own axis, watching each other. These were very decrepit, toothless, bearded and bent ; for the most part arrayed after the manner of pensioners in top-hats that Beau Nash might have worn and livery that might have been the property of the first Lord Chesterfield's retainers. One felt that it was almost time that they were cleaned. They had ceased to be picturesque.

There was another type of loiterer equally prominent, though more loquacious. Small groups of women with string-bags and children stood and watched while some other member of their sex approached, met and passed them. I could feel the lash of their tongue as they ultimately announced their verdict : " Wot I says is this : 'ow any self-respecting woman of 'er sort 'as the imperence to wear them clothes while 'er children is left to starve——"

" Ay, and 'er tongue's allus clackin' somethink chronic about t'other folks' goings-on——"

" And they *do* say——"

There was a third type more restless than the other two. Men of extraordinary importance and men of equally quite uncanny insignificance were carrying bags and disappearing into shops and out again like bees.

These commercial travellers, birds of passage, lent a certain air of " busy-ness " to the street, especially those who hired some youthful pensioner to wheel up their baskets of samples on the station barrow.

These were indeed high-necked and of a proud stomach.

"Can you let me have four-and-eightpence?" came the voice of my wife from inside the shop. "They can't change a ten-shilling note."

"I don't think they'll take stamps," she said, as I cleaned myself out.

"Try," I said laconically. I propped myself up against the side of the curb once more. Three of the oldest of those who had been standing close now scented in me one who would deprive them of their profession: they moved towards me, hobbling, shuffling and snuffing. I surveyed them kindly and saw, to my astonishment, eyes smouldering with hate and faces livid with impotent fury. They halted, glared and remained rooted to the spot. I had apparently taken their beat or standing-ground. With an ill-assumed air of carelessness I turned into the shop once more.

"I think I'll get some tobacco," I said.

"I shan't be a minute, dear," said my wife. "Have you got thruppence ha'p'ny?"

I never reached the "cigar merchant." I was far too much intrigued with a chalked-up notice outside a fruit shop.

"Y R U looking at this?"

Because my bananas R A bliss."

I was thrilled: I bought bananas: this progressive advertiser had also change: I was astounded.

"I've only had this shop a fortnight," he said. "It's rather slow after Clapham is Fordcombe." I wondered how long his initiative and originality would last.

I was dragged away into a draper's shop by my wife.

"I knew if you came you'd only spend money needlessly," she said. "We've got heaps of bananas at home."

"Not blissful ones," I answered, but she was already trying to match some green wool. I was marooned on an island of vest buttons, antimacassars and cotton lengths, drowned in a sea of cardboard notices: "Unique value, 2s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.," "Rare bargain, 5s. 3d.," "Extra-superfine quality, 1s. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.," legends all. The proprietor meanwhile walked up and down the shop, surveying his assistants and goods much as Nebuchadnezzar surveyed Babylon; once or twice he went to the door to see a passing cart or wheelbarrow, humming the while and beating his hands together queerly. The busy hum of the great world outside, combined with the great business he was doing within (my wife had the shop to herself for forty minutes), obviously made him believe that he was on his way to emulate Mr Selfridge.

"They say Fordcombe is full of scandalmongers," said my wife, as she piled up load after load on my shoulders. "I'm glad we live right in the country."

"Scandal is the one thing that flourishes there," I replied. "The Heart of London or the Heart of the Country for us: those are the only places where anything is ever really accomplished . . . the rest is froth and blather, dead——"

"Don't moralise," she interrupted. "I'm not a dictaphone. If you want to write an article about it, wait till we get home."

"Have a banana," I said. "They R A bliss."

XXVII

WALKING TOURS

i

MR G. M. TREVELYAN'S panacea for all ills, his infallible remedy for all breakdowns, mental, physical and spiritual, is to walk. The walker seems to possess, in his opinion, nearly all the attributes which St Paul (himself a connoisseur in the art of pedestrianism) allows to his favourite virtue; he is long-suffering and kind, he is not puffed up and certainly doth not behave himself unseemly; there is, in short, about the walker a charm, a perfection so nearly allied with that commonly supposed to be celestial, that we cannot but help thinking that a man begins to claim kinship with the angels only when he has joined the brotherhood of those who amble along, trusting to their own natural powers to propel them at the exact speed requisite for ease, and conducive to high thinking and fine living.

However this may be, it is certain that no sane-minded person can view with anything but envy the man paddling along the river-bed or lying on the cool green velvet of the moss by the water-side at the edge of a great wood on a hot summer's day, while he himself is trundling along the white dusty roads in his car, Leviathan impotent, carving out a course only between extremely thin limits, unable to leave the beaten track

of virtue where accidents occur innumerable, and frantic haste and lethargic mammon reign hand in hand, blinded by their own dust, unseeing, unthinking, unknowing. The walker is his own master, stepping aside from the stereotyped, conventional way whenever he sees the gleam of the will-o'-the-wisp or hears the magic of Pan's pipes. The throb of the engines and the toot-toot of the horn effectually prevent the motorist from ever hearing the fairy voices or seeing the elusive pixies ; Pan's tribe are too easily frightened by the noise and too subtle ever to be caught by men whose minds run on carburettors, exhaust valves and clutches.

The walker seems to be a man set apart from his fellows ; a poet who expresses himself, not in the written word, but in the motion of his legs, the surgings of his breast, the suffused glow of his face as he climbs the crest of a hill and gazes on a new Promised Land lying at his feet, ready to be conquered, willing to give up her hidden treasure only to him who has dared the steep ascent and now having impregnated his whole being with the breath that she breathes and mingled his mortal clay with the earth he is trying to love as the great mother, the one to whom a man can bring all his worries and troubles and see for the first time the pettiness of them all and adjust his outlook in the future, sure of sympathy, love and understanding.

The standards set by his surroundings, the relative merits and demerits of certain attitudes towards life, all are readjusted, newly fixed in place after this sacred communion with this mystic goddess in her temple of the hills and vales. Certain it is that a man never returns from a walking tour with quite the same ideas,

hardly the same religion as when he started. He has seen deeper into the meaning of life, he has witnessed realities, while his daily routine is made up of the importance of being trivial, bound in the fetters of clothes' worship and the fetish of the favoured few who control and sway the souls of the many. The greatest crime in the world is not, as Bernard Shaw says, to be poor in money, but to be poor in ideas, and business and professional life seems designed to impoverish the brain, to keep under any originality of thought, any tendency towards reality in any shape or form.

A day alone, a day in the company only of the trees and the shades, the rills and braes, the moor and forest, do more to show a man the fatuity of his outlook in daily life than book after book of philosophy, ethics, religion or economics. But it is not with so high an ideal that man is originally caught in the snare. Sometimes it is anger that drives him from the society of someone whom he really loves (more, perhaps, in the flesh than in the spirit) to the loneliness of the bog or fen: he starts out surly, angry with himself for being angry, angry with the world for not understanding him; the black mood is on him, he clenches his fists, throws his head back and starts at breakneck speed perhaps, to begin with, along a main road. Distracted more than ever by the noise and clamour, the dust and heat of the hard flints, he leaves it (all walkers do) for the fields and hedges, his pessimism deepening.

Soon a farmer appears, law-abiding, threatening; his mood changes, he becomes again the small boy, evading justice, healthy, lustful. He decides not to wait; the angry turbulence of the burly artisan incites him to flight, the fever of the chase is on him, he starts

to run, as a fox or hare, his only idea being to outwit the representative of order, the embodiment of the God of things as they are. His superiority in training soon begins to tell, the distance between pursuer and pursued to lengthen, the savage menace grows ever softer and softer in his ears, and at length he chooses a shady spot by the water-side on which to throw himself down and gloat, panting on the victory of the Lord of Misrule. He is, as it were, blooded, the freedom of the earth is his ; gaily, light-heartedly he now treads where he will, ever alert for the sound of dog, or gun, or land-owner : the happy trespasser coming into his own. Again his mood changes with the passing hours ; the beauty and the majesty displayed before him, all his to drink in and adore, begin to stupefy him ; like Hazlitt he carols and sings, shouts and capers for joy, like a satyr he jumps from point to point, ejaculating meaningless savage pæans of triumph at being a free man, unbridled, lawless ; perhaps in the heat of the day he comes upon a deep, clear pool in which Arcadian nymphs have but lately been bathing. Quickly he divests himself of all his garments and, chuckling, throws himself into the water, splashing, gurgling with pure delight, afterwards running madly to and fro on the soft turf in the full light of the sun, drying himself. No sooner dry than lo ! he must needs dive in again and then repeat the process till he is tired, what time he will select some nook in which to sleep and dream while fancy longings and strange whisperings just reach his ears, mingled with the humming of the bees and the lapping of the brook over the stones on its way to the sea.

All the wonder and the glory of the natural world will

by now have obsessed his soul, and aimlessly wandering the newly born poet will fill his longing, aching soul with memories long-lived and satisfying in time of need. Pangs of hunger will cause him first to seek some inn or cottage where an evening meal may be had, and by this time, the fiery ordeal being passed, he will be ready to talk with human beings again. Those whom he will find in the out-of-the-way hamlet at which he arrives will fit in with his present mood admirably; the yokels' talk in the bar parlour, settling the affairs of the nation in a way not far removed from that adopted by Cabinet ministers, will probably tickle his sense of his personal superiority to average human beings, and he will sentimentally reflect on the vanity of human wishes and the topsy-turvydom of life as lived by these puny worldlings.

Smoking his night pipe, while leaning over the parapet of the village bridge, he will ruminate on the frailty of men's minds, of his remoteness from actualities (to his inestimable advantage), of what he might be doing (again to his advantage), of the strangeness of men's ways and of how fine a sermon he had to preach to mankind if they would only drop the scales from their eyes, their hands from their ears and no longer be blind and deaf, but see and hear. Following on this will come a sense of peace and goodwill, and as he reluctantly goes indoors to bed he thinks of the Milton or the Spenser in his pocket, over which he will lovingly dwell as a prelude to the great adventure—sleep.

ii

Walking tours are not only for those who would, for purposes of rest, get away from their loved ones to re-

adjust their point of view. There is the man threatened by brain-fag who needs a change, but can afford neither time nor money to go away for long. He starts on Saturday as soon as he can leave his occupation, with the minimum of luggage on his back, quite likely none ; he will take the train just far enough to get clear of the town, and will follow any field or path that looks inviting. Perhaps, like the hero of Edwin Pugh's tale, he will abide by the toss of a coin when he vacillates between two ways. Gradually, as with the other man, the shackles will fall from him, and nature's sweet balm will soothe his jangled nerves, the change of scene will effect its cure, and after two days he will return to his work as if it were after two months, refreshed and reinvigorated. He will have talked with those whose tastes and outlook are as different as possible from his own, eaten food of a sort as far removed as can be from that usual at his own table at home or in the City, and have found room in his mind for thoughts undreamt of before.

Not only for men has walking an abiding fascination, but boys, too, bored by the unaccustomed tedium of home after school, sometimes find their salvation in departing from their haunts of the cinema and theatre, riding or driving, and solitary, or in couples, go off to explore the country lying round their home for days at a time. Usually starting at a prodigious speed, with the idea of doing long distances each day, after a little the record-breaking fatuity gives way to the saner pleasure of letting the country do what it will, guide you where it please, gently imbuing you with the spirit of rest and content, showing you adventure and excitement where you least expected it, within perhaps a few miles of your own house, but off the beaten track.

The beauty of walking, too, lies in the fact that there need not be, and ought not to be, any specific protracted preparation. All the baggage required may well be carried on the back; the expenses need not be more than trifling; the essentials are a stout heart, a nature accustomed to the open air and the strange vagaries of temperature and weather, strong boots or shoes, and comfortable clothes, and for most of us a favourite author, perhaps two, one of which at least ought to be a poet. Poetry appeals doubly—nay, trebly—to a man who has entered into the very heart of life during the day; all prose, light fiction especially, seems peculiarly insipid and lifeless after partaking of the excitements of a real day full of incident, as all days are off the beaten road.

For boys particularly are walking tours of invaluable benefit, for the real inculcation of historical and geographical association can never be so well realised as by personal visits made in this way to places famous for old-time battles and far-off names. What is there so enchanting about that little patch of mud that calls itself Cranmere, in the middle of Dartmoor, that makes people fight through eight miles of bog in order to post a card which will take longer to reach its destination than if it were posted in France?

There is a whole realm of undeveloped romance waiting for the man who will walk. At once all creatures claim kinship. Passers-by all salute him, and he in return wishes them (meaning it) a really good night or good morning. Trees and flowers, meadows and streams all seem to assume a personality, all have some glad message to communicate, reserved for him who treads carefully, slowly and thoughtfully

one minute, and capers caressingly over the grass the next—messages that gladden the heart of the wayfarer and invest him with new enthusiasm, fresh ideals. It matters not so much what country you select to walk in, so long as you start somewhere and do not go on planning fresh countries and never begin. To some men Dartmoor and Exmoor are the only walkable places in England; they must have the utter solitude and the far expanse of tor and moorland, of mountain streams, a sense of absolute loneliness. Others explore the valley of the Thames, the Evenlode, the Windrush, the Avon, or the Severn. Most men require water in the prospect at some part of their journey; it enhances the beauty of the land, it talks to one as a companion, it comes in materially at lunch-time, or when a bathe becomes a necessity or an imperative luxury.

There is really nothing except a quaint tradition that compels us to go far away from home on these tours. When I lived in Derbyshire I always took the train to some far-away place like Padstow and walked round Cornwall; when I lived in Cornwall nothing would content me nearer than Amlwch or Rosthwaite. But this is obviously mere superstition. I have had some of the most adventurous and delightful walks within ten or twenty miles of my own door, amid scenery that I scarcely knew to exist except on the map. There is hardly a county in Great Britain that is not worth walking over, for old houses and historic associations will sometimes counterbalance the loss of majestic rocks and yawning chasms, high mountains and wide-spread lakes. Nor need the weather depress one. Wind and rain on Helvellyn are joys to be tasted, the battling against adverse weather one of the most enjoy-

able sensations possible to anyone tingling with health and *joie de vivre*. And at the end of the day I doubt whether there is any bodily ecstasy comparable to that of the tired walker falling into his hot bath, lazily washing away the dust and sweat of the day as he lies comfortably slack, with no cares to oppress him, only looking forward to the bodily comforts of food and smoke. Harassed by no thought of letters or newspapers, he can contentedly take his time, knowing that nothing of more importance than a desultory conversation with stray villagers awaits him that night, to be followed by a golden hour of reunion with his favourite poet. But perhaps the glory and the grandeur of walking, like the glory and grandeur of most other good things, consists as much in the reflection as in the actual doing. Looking out of the window of the office on a fresh April or May morning, with the sun streaming in on our heads, we longingly reflect on some other spring day when we lay in woods surrounded by cowslips and harebells, the trees all proudly rustling in their fresh green dress, the world wakening once more to the call of the sun, spellbound, breathless, lest by disturbing the great mother the vision and the ecstasy should vanish. I am tempted to enlarge on this and give a few characteristic days to show how little anything matters except the fact that you walk. I think of those Sunday excursions round Oxford, when we would catch the ten-o'clock train for Didcot, and set out leisurely for the Ridgeway, sometimes tempted by the church bells, mingling with the smaller tinkle of the sheep-bells, to enter some village church, to the open-mouthed astonishment of the few villagers, who would turn round and gape at us steadily throughout the service.

Afterwards we would get on to the high ground, and on the wide, green Icknield Way set our faces westward, in thought at one with the conquering hordes of ancient tribes chanting some eerie war song; at others in rhythmic time joining the softly treading, steady march of the Roman legions, or the fearless, well-disciplined ranks of Alfred's men on our way to Æscundune, dreaming of all who had passed victorious or beaten along this deserted upland, whether Dane or Saxon, Norman or English, Roundhead or Cavalier, till our day-dream is subtly disturbed by the sight of a faint whisper of white smoke far down in the valley, as if it were the breath of some huge earthworm or some fiery dragon recovered to be killed by a latter-day Beowulf. So vivid is the impression of past days on our minds that even the train smoke as it curls among the trees of the Vale of White Horse assumes a beauty we rarely grant it in more mundane moments.

Our lunch, of course, we have brought with us (no sane walker would ever eat a midday meal within doors); we are strangely unlucky if we cannot find some shepherd lad or gipsy to share it with us if we desire company; the conversation once started will prove rich to all real lovers of the human race, and there are few walkers who have not the milk of human kindness and true gentleness and sympathy in abundance. Toward evening we draw on to the British camp and the White Horse, and gaze longingly over the far west down towards the Bristol Channel, where lies the magic land of heart's desire all bathed in gold, so near it seems, yet never attainable.

We descend to Uffington to tea and Evensong, or to talk to the ex-sergeant who owns the White Lion and

hear his Indian experiences and his pretty fourteen-year-old Gwladys on the piano. Talking to this family the time passes quickly, till our night train takes us back to Oxford, a place we seem to have left years ago. Obviously in four years this walk will often be repeated, and so we form lifelong friendships in the inns and country cottages. Once we tried it in the snow, but had to retrace our steps after the first four miles. Or we would go north by taking the seven-o'clock train to Banbury, breakfast there and go by way of Broughton Castle to Compton Wynyates, most inaccessible and fairy-like of castles, *en route* for Edgehill and the Cotswolds; a long day this, which necessitates a night walk into Moreton-in-the-Marsh to catch the evening train. In the hot summer days we would explore the rivers leading into the Thames, paddling and bathing to our hearts' content, covering but few miles, but far from crowds or faces and scenery that we knew, alive, happy and supremely thankful to exist.

The great walks are the walks that take weeks. Those, for instance, which start at Porlock and work round the Devon and Cornish coast, and embrace Dartmoor and Exmoor. I have dealt with one of these in another part of this book.

iii

“I have two doctors, my left leg and my right,” wittily wrote a great walker; “when body and mind are out of gear I know that I have only to call in my doctors and I shall be well again.”

As a cheap cure, an infallible cure, and in many cases the only cure for mental and physical ills, walking has

not of late years been so popular a pastime as it ought to have been.

Nearly all England's great men have been prodigious walkers, yet, in spite of the unassailable testimony of good men and true of all ages, the modern man is chary of taking their advice, and prefers to spend his leisure hours pottering about in the house, playing cards or billiards, when, with a little effort, he might be a changed being, happy where he is now morose, light-heartedly irresponsible instead of bowed and haggard with the cares and troubles which brood over him, healthy instead of sluggish.

All that is needed is determination and time. The jaded business man who decides to leave London after lunch on Saturday and walk for the rest of the day and the day following will return to his work on Monday as much refreshed as if he had been to Italy or the Riviera.

But he must have faith : Nature does not reveal her choicest secrets to the motorist or cyclist . . . nor does she extend her healing power to the walker until he is thoroughly exhausted.

The opening stages of any walk may well be tedious and uninspiring. In the first place, the road is probably all too familiar : it is only when one breasts an unknown rise and stands on some Pisgah height unvisited before that some of the true rich warmth of feeling begins to permeate mind and body.

It is better to take no companion on these expeditions, unless it be an ordnance map. You are setting out with the idea of getting a complete change : it is no change at all to pound along the highroad threshing out domestic problems with a friend. It is the very essence of walking that you make fresh friends at

frequent intervals, picking them up and discarding them as if they were passengers on a train. You must be free to walk at your own pace, to run if you want to, to loiter when it pleases you, to stop and gaze at a view for a whole hour if you feel like it, without the possibility of giving occasion for boredom or annoyance in anyone else's breast.

Your mood may require that you strike the highroad and march along briskly and rhythmically at four miles an hour without having to deviate from or think of your route. Again, your mood may call for soft, velvety, half-forgotten lanes, woodland glades; streams to jump, luxurious mossy banks on which to fall asleep, sky-blue mountain tarns in which to bathe.

The wise man will risk the charge of unsociability and refuse to barter his perfect liberty for the sake of someone with whom to talk.

It is one of the merits of walking that it restores you to health when you are sick : it is at least equally meritorious in that it provides the cheapest, easiest and best means of keeping fit whatever your age.

When I was in the strictest training for track or cross-country running I always walked between twenty-five and thirty miles every Sunday, and I can honestly say that I hold in the storehouse of my brain no such fragrant and rich memories as of these weekly walks, undertaken as often as not in pouring rain, sleet or snow, over country commonly supposed to be dull. I have still to find a stretch of country in England which for thirty miles on end presents nothing of interest. England is so much more beautiful than you could ever believe if you haven't walked in your search for her beauties.

The walker is more independent than anyone else in the land. He can choose his speed, his route, his retinue (fellow-tramps will join and leave him almost at his will); there are practically no rules for him to obey, except that of destroying all traces of his lunch and of being polite to truculent farmers; for, of course, the true walker will always trespass. No walk is worthy of the name that does not include much crossing of private land; farmers are nearly always only too ready to provide access across their ground, but if you are careful there ought to be no need of your having to ask permission. There is always a touch of piquancy and adventure in knowing that you may be chased by dogs and irate farm hinds, which adds immensely to the joys of walking.

And when the day is over and you have arrived for the night at the inn of your choice, you will find that no food ever tasted so delicious as this homely fare of the country-side, no drink so nectar-like as their particular brand of beer, no pipe so refreshing as the one you smoke after supper in the bar or as you lean over the bridge watching the moon play upon the water below. If by any chance you enter into conversation with your fellow-man, you will find that your powers of talking supreme common sense have increased a thousandfold as a result of your day's walk. You will go to bed at peace with all the world, the worries that perchance in the morning threatened to overwhelm you completely forgotten.

However long or short a time you can afford, you will get more genuine enjoyment out of a walking tour (which is the cheapest holiday imaginable) than out of any other form of holiday-making I know. If it's only

a week-end you can spare you'll feel as if you had been away a month ; if it's a month you will have acquired enough material to write a book of reminiscences about your adventures.

Youth craves for excitement and adventure, and seeks it, as misguided as the moth, in the glare of the foot-lights, the city streets, the gin-palace, even sometimes in the opium den. Adventure can never be forced ; it is no exotic plant to be artificially reared. Would that youth could learn that simple fact. It can't be bought ; you may sell your health, squander your patrimony in the search for it, but it comes like fortune to those who disregard it, who go forth in the wake of Don Quixote, Tom Jones and George Borrow, tramping the highways and byways. There is just as much romance to be found on the turnpike to-day as ever.

There is no golden road to learning, but there is a golden road to health and happiness, and that is the road outside your house. Take it and see. Like all the truly great things in life it is simple—so simple that nearly everybody has missed it.

XXVIII

A COURSING MEETING

I HAD never been to a coursing meeting before, but "The Green Man" was so close.

Blankney lay in a thick mist when we set out at nine-forty-five, but before we had been ten minutes on the road we emerged in golden sunshine. We followed in the wake of other cars and turned into an enormous field, in the middle of which stood a horseman clad in red ; a "slipper" in green stood with two hounds in leash crouching by a far wall ; riders from far and near were heading hares into the fatal arena.

Mulcted of four shillings each for a card, we wandered into the field and found ourselves among an indescribably cosmopolitan crowd, mainly composed of "bookies." We were not there to bet, so we left the horde of paper-droppers and sat and basked on a wall.

In quick succession we saw three heats run off, in all of which we were delighted to see the hare completely defeat the greyhounds. I had no idea before of the amazing speed with which a hare twists : again and again the long-legged, sharp-nosed chasers seemed to be on top of their victim, when the hare would swerve (how much would not an international three-quarter give for that skill !) and the greyhounds overrun the mark.

Then ensued an appalling wait : the "beaters" could find no hares ; the field seemed to go to sleep ;

we produced our sandwiches and drink and settled down to lunch.

Half-way through our meal, without any warning at all, two more hounds were slipped after a white hare. She seemed in no hurry; she merely ran round and round the middle of the field, playing with the two black, Mephistopheles-like competitors, and then gave them a straight two hundred yards, making towards us—a bound and she was over the wall into the wood. It wasn't till afterwards that we heard that the white hare was locally regarded as bewitched and had been used for years, and completely defeated every hound that had chased it. Had it been killed, I believe the meeting would have been broken up then and there.

Then came a few kills. No, I cannot reconcile myself to those. The only thing that stands out in my mind is that one doesn't seem to feel it half so much when the hare is being killed at the other end of the field—but under one's very eyes, with that heart-rending squeal! Why can't hares ever utter a cry except when they are being done to death? Don't tell me they don't mind it or don't feel it. . . . But enough of this squeamish humanitarianism.

A red flag goes up to show that the first-named hound on the card has won this round, and one is surprised to find that it was the beaten hound that caught the hare.

One had somehow thought that the end and not the means mattered in judging this sort of thing.

Suddenly the crowd melt away; we rub our eyes; surely it is not over? We hurry after them; the venue is changed; we waddle like a lot of ducks down the furrows of a plough, hundreds of fat men. Very few ladies attend coursing meetings. I am glad of this.

We crawl for a mile and start again ; we see the hare rounded up in one field, men galloping everywhere to get her to run through the gap into our presence.

The poor fated wretch comes ambling along all unconscious ; she emerges into the great bare plain, realises what the game is, and is off at lightning speed straight for the crowd. We have been warned beforehand to stand still. I obey implicitly. The hare makes straight for me and brushes my leg ; two seconds later one of the greyhounds, at close quarters clumsier than I thought, hits himself hard up against my calf. I am really glad, and hope I have upset someone's betting calculations. The hare escapes, and much money changes hands.

It is five o'clock before we reach the finals, and they provide the dullest sport of the day. The two greyhounds disappear altogether from the field in less than five seconds and the white flag goes up as soon as they leave the ground, though how any judge could decide between them in that space of time no novice like myself could possibly tell. But the hounds, unlike some earlier in the day, do not this time desist from their chase on reaching the boundaries of the field ; we can just see them skirmishing across a ploughed field a quarter of a mile away ; they catch their hare in some roots beyond, and wait for some human being to remove the body.

Well, I suppose I got my four shillings' worth : I certainly did not get it in sport, because, according to my definition of that much-abused word, it is necessary to take some active part in a game before it becomes a sport to you.

If I got my money's worth, I got it in information. I now know enough about coursing to decide that I prefer to chase hares with beagles : we may not kill so many, but we do get a run for our money, and so does the hare !

XXIX

THE HOUSE OF TWO GREAT LOVES

MOOD PARK, in Surrey, is to be sold by auction—"the sweetest place that I have seen," as Sir William Temple called it.

No other house conjures up such romantic memories as this remote country house near Farnham, where Temple came to rest with his hard-won bride, Dorothy Osborne, and where Swift was to suffer the pangs of patronage and learn to love the ill-starred Stella.

Nor are there any romances in all fiction to compare with the love stories of Dorothy Osborne and Hester Johnson.

Dorothy first met Sir William in an inn in the Isle of Wight, where her Royalist brother had been arrested for inscribing derogatory comments about the Round-heads on a window-pane. She took the crime on her shoulders and was released, and Temple immediately fell in love with the courageous girl. But the path of true love in their case was destined to be rough.

Even when the Civil War was over her Royalist parents were averse from the marriage. She was sought by many suitors, of whom Henry Cromwell (strangely enough) was one. For seven years the lovers were kept apart, unhappily for them, but happily for our literature, which has been permanently enriched by the love letters Dorothy Osborne wrote. They are unlike any others in the world : to read them

even to-day is to fall victim to this constant yet quick-witted, sunny-tempered yet shrewd, lady of the seventeenth century. And then, just when all obstacles to their union had been overcome, Dorothy lost all her great beauty and nearly her life as well, owing to small-pox. Temple married her, notwithstanding, in 1654, and lived in happiness at Moor Park to a great age, at the latter end of which they entertained in Swift an exceeding angry angel unawares, and so gave opportunity for the beginning of a romance as adventurous as their own.

To have missed Dorothy Osborne's letters is to have missed one of the most entrancing stories that ever book has told. What an insight into the *Oliver Twist*-like spirit of the male lover do we not get from this ending: "For God's sake, be in better humour, and assure yourself I am as much as you can wish your faithful friend and servant"?

Surely if anyone was capable of helping Swift and Stella, the writer of these letters ought to have been—and yet how tragic were the relations of those other two lovers. It was not disparity of age that kept Hester from marrying a lover seventeen years older than herself. She worshipped him—even to the extent of exiling herself to a remote village in Ireland in order to be near him. It was not lack of affection on his part. He "loved her better than his life a thousand millions of times."

The mystery will never be cleared up. He may have detected in himself signs of madness—but it is useless to conjecture.

We only know that he kept a lock of her hair enclosed in a paper on which he wrote: "Only a woman's hair"—which is to me a cry wrung from the depths of his great soul.

XXX

HUNTING DAYS FOR CITY CLERKS

“**F**EBRUARY fill-dyke. . . . Who but a fool would go out in such weather ? ” say you.

You are wrong. This is the best month in all the year for several outdoor pursuits.

You have no objection to playing football in lashing rain and howling wind ; nay, more, you positively enjoy it. You have no objection to watching magnificent exhibitions of endurance and skill in the English Cup Ties, even if the ground is sodden and a heavy pall of fog deprives you of the chance of seeing more than one-tenth of the game. You revel in your luck in being able to get on to the ground at all.

It is all nonsense in the face of this to suggest that the average Englishman cares a “tuppenny hoot” about the weather.

He is completely impervious to any vagaries of the thermometer or barometer. . . . For centuries he has been an outdoor man, a “sportsman” ; and neither hyper-civilisation nor city life can do more than cover with a thin veneer the primitive desires that are deep-rooted in his system.

Every Saturday at eleven o’clock or thereabouts in every part of the country you will see throughout the month of February farmers’ boys, motor mechanics, railway porters, draymen, postmen, shop assistants, every sort of male and female creature, from babies in

arms to decrepit greybeards, collecting round the gates of some country house or on remote village greens.

Are they there, think you, with perfervid zeal to hear a new John Wesley or to listen to the honeyed accents of a Parliamentary candidate? Not they. Only one thing could drag them out of doors on such a day as this—a day of leaden skies, of squelching mud in the lanes, of steady, monotonous downpour. It is not to view the landscape, which is at its dreariest; it is not to discuss local scandals or news of national and momentous importance.

It is—watch their faces—to see eighteen couples of hounds and two or three score great-hearted men in pink and women in black pass by. Nor is it just the pageantry that calls them; for—watch them again—they do not remain passive when a horn blows and the whole cavalcade rides on.

They, too, join the procession on bicycles, in dog-carts, on their own feet. . . . For the next few hours the whole country-side will be transformed. At every turn you will see weary legs dragging over heavy plough, bicycles lying up against gates, small girls well lodged in thorny hedges, small boys in the topmost boughs of trees, porters racing down railway lines, stately women changing horses, deserted motors, heavily uniformed chauffeurs waving frantically, riderless horses, dots of pink in the distance, blobs of black in the brook—a whole district gone mad, you think.

Not so. Regard their faces. The ecstasy that lights them up is only to be seen at other times on the faces of lovers reunited, on the faces of spendthrifts who have unexpectedly come into a fortune, on the faces of those who have caught a train which they deserved to

lose, on the faces of mothers looking at their sleeping children.

"But we," you say, "do not live in the country-side; you write of joys we wot not of. We are dwellers in Suburbia."

Have you ever taken the trouble to ascertain from your local paper where is the nearest meet of hounds? You will be staggered to find how near it is. An omnibus, a tramcar, a bicycle—and you are there.

There are beagles in Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Berkshire, Essex, and even, I think, in Middlesex.

These beagles are followed by countless hordes. Hunting is not only the sport of kings; it is also the king of sports, and as such claims the allegiance of us all.

It is at once royal and democratic. It makes no demand whatever upon your purse. It is like all the best things in life—the air we breathe, the rain we curse, the sun we bless—free, altogether free.

A Saturday spent in following hounds not only puts you right with yourself; it gives you enough exercise to last you a week; it gives you a glow of satisfaction at the thought of being alive in so excellent a world; it gives you endless topics of conversation for the day of rest (you will be thankful for that) . . . it finally disposes of the question: "Who but a fool would go out in such weather?"

It makes you more than ever certain that "weather doesn't matter." You do not even notice that there has been any weather. You have been in heaven.

I have not dilated on the joys of hunting—like heaven, they defy description; I am merely pointing

out the fact that the joys are there. I am showing you the way to happiness.

If you will not take it, you cannot want it ; and you can stay indoors drumming your finger-nails against the window-pane, saying fretfully : " What rotten weather ! What can a fellow do on a day like this ? "

XXXI

THE BROAD HIGHWAY

THE railways have almost ceased to serve you. Do not "grouse"! Adapt yourself. Rejoice in your chance to rediscover the open road! You cannot read in your motor char-à-banc, on your bicycle, or in your car as you do in a train. You can do something better: you can regain your historic sense and get back to a "merrie" England untroubled by strife. If you go about it in the proper spirit you will even be thankful that you spent your Whitsuntide without having recourse to trains.

Now is your chance to compare the romance of travelling as it is to-day with the romance of travelling as it used to be. If you are on your feet you will tread the soft, wide, grassy tracks of the great Roman roads undisturbed by all men except shepherds—and the quietness will work on you so that you will be one with the Roman legions and weave legends for yourself sweeter by far than fact.

But for the great majority who will be taking to the six main artery lines out of London, is there no romance for you?

Does the Brighton road mean no more to you than the road to Brighton? Shut your eyes or your mind until you have left behind the tram-lines and the squalor of Tooting and open them on the gorse-clad heights of Burgh Heath! As you descend into Reigate

a panorama of green tree-fringed hills and far-stretching valleys will wring an involuntary gasp of delight from you—but do you realise, as you rattle through Crawley, that you are passing the scene of the greatest boxing matches that have ever been fought ?

Can you not envisage the Royal Eagle, the True Blue, and other historic coaches, filled with “ Corinthian ” bucks of the Regency days, galloping up to the famous inn where emperors have stayed the night ere now ?

And what of the Bath road, where Claude Duval would hold you up on lonely Hounslow Heath as you creaked along in the Flying Machine, or of the Exeter road with its dangerous Bagshot Heath, or the York road where Dick Turpin ruled and John Gilpin rode ?

But perhaps most romantic of all is the Dover road, with its stream of kings returning from exile and queens going to be married, with its stream of Canterbury Pilgrims merrily chattering through Deptford of the Golden Hind, where Kit Marlowe was killed, over Shooter’s Hill and Gad’s Hill, for ever immortal through Dickens and Falstaff.

Lastly, be in no hurry to pass the inns: the hotel at your journey’s end will contain no such treasures as you wrest from the George at Stamford, the Angel at Grantham, the inn at Stilton, the Clayton Arms at Godstone, the Dorset Arms at East Grinstead—and a thousand other hostelries that are passed unnoticed by the unthinking.

XXXII

THE VARSITY RUGGER MATCH

ASK any Public School boy in the country where he would be if he had unlimited choice to-day; his answer would be—Twickenham. Ask any Oxford or Cambridge undergraduate, or his sister or his cousin or his aunt or his father or his mother, where he or she will be this afternoon, and the answer will be—Twickenham.

Ask any man who devotes himself to business from year's end to year's end to come for a holiday abroad, to play golf, to dance with the nicest girl in the world: he may refuse every time. Watch him to-day slinking guiltily out of his office: he, too, will be at Twickenham.

What is the secret of this glamour which makes thousands of our most revered countrymen of all ages shout themselves literally dumb with hoarseness and behave as if there were no amenities of civilisation to be preserved? Whence this exhilaration which lasts hours after the match is over and manifests itself in a desire to sing and to break things in our most respectable and demure West End?

The Boat Race inspires the whole country to sport a light or dark blue ribbon as whim or fancy dictates: everyone is interested. The varsity match at Lord's gives an opportunity for the display of pretty faces, smart frocks, and the wearing of top-hats, but nothing

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in the whole sporting year really matters to some of us but the rugger match. Why? I will tell you.

It is here that we most nearly approach to warfare in the romantic, mediæval sense. Here we have collected thirty of the strongest, fastest, wildest, and certainly bravest of the country's youth.

From the time that the whistle blows until "No side" is sounded there is quite literally a battle royal. Sixteen forwards fight without cessation for the possession of a ball with a vigour which is absolutely unsparing. They struggle with a frenzy which gives them far more than ordinary human endurance. Four halves and eight three-quarters stand poised, alert as hawks, ready to pounce upon the ball and then run, feint, hand off, deceive, pass and back up, their brains as well as their bodies working like lightning. Two backs remain in the dim distance, gigantic, statuesque, knowing that with them lies the final issue, the safe fielding of a tricky ball, the long kicking into touch, the desperate tackle that just saves the otherwise certain try.

The rugger match is a wonderful sight to watch, because—you never know. One false slip on the part of one man and the whole tenor of the game is changed. Until the whistle blows for the last time it is anybody's game.

It is the endurance of the men that so endears them to us, the killing pace that does so nearly kill that thrills us so; the reckless audacity with which one man will drop on the ball with eight men apparently tearing him limb from limb; it is, above all, the fact that there is almost nothing that a man may not do in his endeavour to outwit his opponents that makes this the king of games.

Two things there are in life to have done which a man may very well be content to forgo his chance of wealth, fame—perhaps even of love (I shall certainly think so this afternoon).

One is to intercept a pass in one's own twenty-five, to fight through the enemy scrum, to get clear, to swerve at the right instant straight out of the arms of the man who marks you, to dash down the whole field of play at sprinter's speed, to feel the arms of the full-back just fail to stop you, and to plant the ball between the goal-posts.

The alternative is to be the back who, when all seems lost and what will be the winning try is about to be scored, dashes across the field and just manages to hurl himself into mid-air and feel his arms safely round the thighs of the three-quarter—down with a crash you both go—the try is saved. “Well tackled, sir ; oh, well tackled !” goes up the cry.

That, too, is a moment in which it would be good to die.

XXXIII

THE GRAND NATIONAL

*Excitement running in waves took hold,
His teeth were chattered, his hands were cold,
His joy to be there was mixed with dread
To be left at post when they shot ahead.*

MASEFIELD, "Right Royal."

MOST of us have felt like that—the few minutes before going out of the pavilion to bat, the moments before the kick-off at football, the waiting on one's marks before the pistol sends us down the cinder track—but there is no thrill comparable to that felt by the rider in the National as he swings in the scales nursing his saddle before weighing out.

There flash through his mind nightmareish pictures of each of those thirty jumps: thorn fences, nearly five feet high, Becher's, Valentine's, each with its six-foot brook on the far side, that murderous sharp left-handed canal turn with its wide ditch on the take-off side at the eighth and twenty-fourth, the open ditch and the water-jump (sixteen feet wide) in front of the grand stand—these things in themselves are bad enough; but as he canters down to the start he may well pray for a quick send-off to quell the thoughts which he cannot now subdue—the responsibility that lies with him to ride with his head.

What was it his trainer had told him to remember ?

“ Now think it a hunt, the first time round ;
Don't think too much about losing ground,
Lie out of your ground, for sure as trumps
There'll be people killed in the first three jumps.”

So difficult not to be hustled into lying with the leaders while you can—but there are four and a half miles to go ; twoscore horses in the pink of condition now, but within a mile how few of them will be still in the running ! He recollects past years. A mile to go and only three on their feet. Then for a second he feels his responsibility to that vast crowd. What a difference it will make to so many of those two hundred thousand if he fails to live up to his reputation to-day ; involuntarily he shivers at that.

He arrives at the start, a medley of silken colours and shining horses thrusting, biting, kicking in their anxiety : they feel the tension not less than their riders. There is a sudden, awe-inspiring hush, the flag falls, a sigh rises from the crowd, and the line of horses surges forward at what is literally a neck-breaking speed of twenty-five miles an hour. There follows the muffled thunder of shining hoofs on spraying turf, and then the unforgettable rush and crash as the first dozen hit the top of the gorsed thorn fence.

Long before the leaders have come round for the first time the whole course is strewn with riderless horses, jockeys endeavouring to remount, others with broken collar-bones or strained limbs limping sadly home, others again, more seriously hurt, lying inert with concussion or worse.

The soaked and mud-bespattered band emerge from the water-jump, and the thrill of watching accidents gives place on the second round to the frenzied excitement of watching the efforts of the few who are still in the race. There is no longer fear of collision or balking: the fear now is lest the horse should have nothing left in him. Even the thirtieth, last and simplest of fences, has proved too much for a worn-out, too sorely tried competitor.

Nearer and nearer come the leaders: the moment for the final effort is reached: "Hup, hup, now!" cries the rider, and the animal answers nobly to the call. With its last ounce of strength it comes down the straight, and as they pass below the stand we see for once the true meaning of that cry that rings through all British sport: "*All out!*" The winning-post is passed, and, whether we backed it or no, we give to horse and rider the finest tribute of which we are capable: tears stand in our eyes, tears of pure emotion, tears of which we are not in the least ashamed, for they are our involuntary testimony to the fact that we have been sincerely touched.

This it is to be thrilled indeed.

XXXIV

A POINT-TO-POINT MEETING

I MAGINE a clear, sunny day in March, the heart of the English country-side; a hillock or ridge—on this one day of the year only—thronged with smartly dressed girls and bowler-hatted men, alert, tanned and military in their bearing, a medley of cars in a row on the top of the ridge, knots of picnic parties squatting round luncheon baskets, a sprinkling of gay silk colours rising above the black multitude as horsemen ride into or out of the paddock, a vista of green fields, stiff hedges pricked out here and there with white and red flags.

There is no sight so calculated to make glad the heart of the sportsman.

There are no expensive enclosures to separate the rich sheep from the poor goats. Duke and navy stand cheek by jowl near the water-jump, united by a common thrill. The high-bred beauty runs side by side with the farm girl when the horses have thundered by on their outward journey, in order to get the best view-point from which to see them finish.

As it is with the crowd, so with the riders. Prince and farmer ride in the same race, and the crowd's applause is for the daring horsemanship, the pluck and endurance displayed. It matters not to them what blood runs through the veins of the competitors. For once snobbery has no place. Money may buy

the best horses, but it will not provide the best riders.

Money doesn't matter. Straight riding does. You can guarantee that every competitor in these meetings will ride himself and his horse "right out" in order to win. I have seen an owner of two horses entered for the same race go down heavily because his fancy of the two has been beaten unexpectedly by its stable companion. After all, you never can tell.

Out of a field of sixteen starters it is long odds that half-a-dozen at least will fall. The jumps are not just ordinary hedges; they are made up to four feet and four feet six high.

In a course of a little over three miles there will scarcely be less than thirty of these obstacles—you are thinking about the take-off at the next as soon as ever you have negotiated one. Then there is the water, heaps of it, and few escape one ducking in an afternoon.

The only drawback to a point-to-point day is its brevity.

If you are wise and the day is clear (oh! the difference that the sun can make), go over the course about noon. You will meet old friends everywhere; you will capture some of the frenzied thrill that seizes upon the riders at the fearsome "tenth," or the seemingly insurmountable "seventeenth." You will test the "stickiness" of the plough, and the "see-sawiness" of the "rig and furrow"; you will get an appetite for lunch, be able to inspect the horses in the paddock, get private tips from owners and riders before they are too harassed by importunate questioners, and select the best position from which to see the course.

Then, at one-fifteen or one-thirty, your eyes will

dilate with excitement as the thin string of riders emerges—some sombre in black, some gay in hunting pink, some flamboyant in racing golds and blues, all placarded with numbers on their backs. They canter down to the starting-post—the middle of a large field—a second's delay, and they are off at a speed that makes you hold your breath. About eight of them seem to clear the first fence simultaneously; at the second there will be four; these will keep together most of the way, with others close in the rear. As the field thins out you will see horse and rider rise for a jump—and only the horse emerge the other side. All along the course between the hedges there will be riderless horses, men running after them to remount, dots of colour hopelessly left behind, and ever a quartet neck and neck in the front, rising together, swallow-like, dashing over the flat for dear life.

They come round to the last three obstacles and the "straight." The bookies shout their odds louder and louder; the crowds dash down the hill towards the finish. Three or four horses are flogged past the winning-post, using their last ounce of strength.

You breathe again, sad to think that there are only three races left—three more frenzied, glorious moments of mad exultation, until at four-thirty you leave the hill to its solitary glory for twelve long months.

What is the secret of the fascination?

It is partly the danger. No one would deny that. It is partly the speed, which has to be seen to be believed; partly the setting, which is so absolutely English in its quiet loveliness; partly the crowd, which is also English of the English; partly the absence of ceremony (you wander where you will, in whatever clothes you

like); but most of all it is inherited instinct, the love that lies deep down in the hearts of all of us for a truly British sport, for here are collected the cream of English riders to hounds, ready to break their necks for the joy of a race.

No mediæval tournament or modern game can compare with this royal sport, which age cannot wither nor custom stale.

XXXV

EIGHTS WEEK

AT four o'clock this afternoon a gun will be fired a mile and a half below Folly Bridge at Oxford, and the serious side of Eights Week will have begun.

On the tow-path by the sides of the boats will be collected heaving masses of lightly clad but heavily armed athletes, their hands clutching rattles, revolvers and trumpets, their legs and heads bare, but their shoulders covered with scarves and blazers of every conceivable blend of colour.

The minute gun went an interminable age ago. White-faced crews lick lips, oars are held tense, men with watches wear a strained look in their eyes . . . then comes the last counting.

"Ten, nine, eight—three, two, one"—the gun sounds, and off they go, churning the waters in a race made fifty thousand times more thrilling than the University Boat Race by reason of the narrowness of the river.

Unable to start level, each boat, except the last one, has to evade a pursuer, an enemy seen by every sweating oarsman, unseen only by the cox, whose eye is fixed on the rudder of the boat in front. Each boat except the leader sets out to "bump" the one before it. Little wonder, as the distance between bows and

sterns lessens, that raucous cries go up from panting runners on the banks.

This is a game in which the spectator takes as much out of himself as the player ; he has to fight his way through masses of other men whose eyes, like his, are rooted on the boats. He has to shout while he runs, to blow encouraging noises on bugles and trumpets while he runs, to wave rattles with his hands while he runs. . . .

Nor, as the end draws nearer, do his difficulties disappear ; with every step he takes the crowd thickens—the despicable crowd who have had the temerity merely to sit or stand on the banks. He metes out short shrift to these : is not his beloved college boat within an ace of ramming the hated rivals in front ? Are there not, he shrieks, barges on the other side of the water for such as these ?

There is a bump . . . he stops, flings his arms up, fires off his pistol repeatedly into the air, exhausts his last ounce of energy in one devastating yell, and, as likely as not, dives into the river to cool his ardour and congratulate his friends in the boat by splashing them.

He may repeat this performance at five o'clock and again at six, for there are three divisions to be rowed off and his college may have a crew rowing in each of them.

So much for one side of the river and one side of Eights Week. The other is, perhaps, no less energetic ; but the energy is spread over a longer period and is reserved for those who allow their sisters, cousins, parents and fiancées to invade the monastic privacy which is normally theirs.

Captured at the station, they will be whirled away

to a punt for lunch under the trees on the Cher, or in the cool of a dimly lit mediæval panelled room in college. . . .

Down through Christ Church meadows an endless stream make for the river, the festooned college barges, or the private punts. Corydon and Phyllis wander in the cool of the evening to admire the window-boxes which light up the High and all the quadrangles.

Next Wednesday he will wave adieux and imagine that his heart is broken—but by to-day week he will be in loose, slack flannels again, dashing madly about the tennis court or trying to save “fours” on the boundary.

And although he does not realise it, he will be glad, for though Eights Weeks is a joyful interlude, it is not Oxford.

XXXVI

SUNDAY BY THE SEA

USUALLY I spend my week-ends in the heart of the country, watching my ducks, feeding my chickens, fetching water in from the pump, wandering about my flower-garden—a wholly delectable and restful occupation. The golden hours flit by carelessly. . . . I am not harassed by crowds of noises : my time is entirely my own, and I spend it prodigally.

By Monday morning I feel as if I had been away from work for a month.

I have gone to bed early and risen late. I have inhaled enough fresh air to keep me alive in London for five days. I have eaten simply, talked of simple things, partaken of simple pleasures, led the simple life.

But last week-end I was unable to go home. I went to the seaside and stayed at an hotel which closely resembled a huge railway station.

The train by which I travelled was most uncomfortably crowded : if you do what everyone else does, you must expect that.

I arrived at the hotel to find myself subjected to the closest scrutiny on the part of the dwellers in the lounge. There seemed to be something radically wrong with me. I was too young and dressed too simply.

I joined the loungers and watched in my turn. There was a distinct unanimity about my fellow-visitors on several points. Nearly all the men had

many chins and were grossly fat: they resembled nothing so much as a herd of swine. The women had this in common: they chose to display on their persons all the vulgar ostentation of wealth.

The males of the species existed, it would seem, solely for the sake of gratifying their stomachs, the women for the sake of decorating their persons.

It was the lack of taste which most appalled me. Here were human beings spending money like water, and the only return they got for it was something ugly and horrible.

They sat long over their meals: they preserved an almost religious silence while they ate: conversation would have distracted them as it distracts all sane dancers. They regarded me with horror. I not only talked, but laughed; the man at the next table read. . . . That, too, was inexcusable.

Between meals one lounged and drank and thought the worst about the passers-by.

I watched an unceasing procession of cars draw up to the door, vomiting forth a medley of obese, rather obscene, gout-ridden men and irritable, overdressed, painted women.

This became intolerable. I walked along the promenade—it was no better. The very shop assistants had begun to ape their richer fellow-creatures in loudness of gesture, gaudy, tasteless clothes and animal manners. I returned to the hotel depressed beyond measure. I tried to write a letter, but the atmosphere of the big, bare library defeated me. I went into the smoking-room to read a book, but the snoring of old men drove me out.

I had a hot bath, and nearly achieved content for five

minutes. . . . I went to bed early and was kept awake by the jazz music below.

I left early on Monday morning. My two days' "holiday" had cost me ten pounds, without tips. In the country I scarcely spend tenpence.

What I want to know is : What do you week-enders in crowded hotels get in return for your outlay ? It is certainly not rest—anything less calculated to give one repose it would be hard to find.

Is it amusement ? One's fellows are rich in humour almost in direct proportion as they are poor in pocket. These Cræsus are weighed down with cares and fatness.

Verily there is a poetic justice in these things.

If you want to preserve your youth and your beauty, and to grasp real happiness, you must go where nature is youthful and beautiful, and where the earth sings of happiness ; you must avoid cities and the artificial life of seaside hotels. To-day we are only too easily deceived ; we mistake all motion for progress ; garish revelry is accepted in lieu of real joy. In our frenzy to get satisfaction we get left with one counterfeit after another.

It is time we looked for another touchstone—our standards are all wrong.

Let us begin, at any rate, by determining to spend Sunday in quiet, remote places. Then we shall at least have the opportunity of thinking clearly and taking stock of our position ; but we must get away from the herd before any change is possible.

Mankind in the mass does not induce noble thinking or noble conduct.

XXXVII

A NOVEL HOLIDAY

IT is the essence of a holiday that it should be a complete change. You don't get a complete change by meeting crowds of people exactly like yourself.

The best sort of holiday is only to be got by doing something as different as possible from what you usually do. That is why caravaners enjoy their life so much.

But there is one sort of holiday that can only be properly indulged in when Easter comes early. The last days of March are the best days for the sport which has fascinated all Englishmen since the race began.

The lust of the chase is an instinct as old as loving. In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of—sport, and the finest sport in the world is that of hunting the fox and hare. You say that you can't afford it; you are wrong: hunting is the cheapest, not the most expensive, of pastimes—so long as you hunt on foot.

Turn up the hunting appointments for this week-end; choose a country that you don't know at all; it may very well be quite close to town; take a train or bicycle the night before to the place where the meet is to be. Put up at the village inn. There's sure to be room.

You will feed royally at very little cost; you will sleep long, comfortably and in peace.

The next day you will don your oldest clothes and wander down to the Hall or the village green and watch a sight that will thrill you in every fibre—fifty or sixty pink-coated riders on greys and roans, chestnuts and bays, pure thoroughbred sportsmen on pure thoroughbred horses, twenty couples of brown-eyed, heavy-jowled, restless hounds, a medley of brown and black and white; cars draw up on the side of the road, a flotilla of cyclists drifts up, the villagers begin to collect.

The clock strikes eleven and the huntsman trots away with the pack, the field cantering after him; within five minutes you are alone, following over plough and grass towards the first covert, a plantation of dark green velvet, against which background the sheen of silk hat of rider and glossy, well-groomed, close-clipped coat of mount show up superbly.

The huntsman casts: "Leu-leu-leu!" blows his horn: a great red dog-fox steals away and you watch the long line of hounds laid on, the shouts of "Go-o-ne—Awaai!" and sixty horses burst out over the hedges at top speed.

You'll never want to waste time again watching horses race on the flat after seeing a good spirited hunt after a fox.

You can keep up with the pack by running, but you can't afford to stop till hounds check. The grass is soft and luscious to your feet as the wind is to your face and hair, but your feelings will be those of the fox as you turn across the upland plough.

Only the sight of the pink, the sound of the horn and the lust of the chase urge you on. Your legs begin to feel like lead, your wind to have completely given out, when you hear a wild "Who-whoop!" and your body

somehow responds, and you spurt on to that little circle in the field, to reach it just as the fox is being thrown to the hounds.

Tired, but very happy, you take advantage of the breathing-space to eat your sandwiches.

Again you follow as they draw for the second time. . . .

Slowly you light your pipe, leisurely you take your way back to the village inn—a boiling bath—a tea of great dimensions, by far surpassing any meal you ever ate before—an evening of talk in the bar with your friends of the night before—stories of historic hunts—and so to bed, feeling that you have been away from the office for a month already.

And that's only the first day.

XXXVIII

THE SUN-DIAL

WHENEVER I have been able to tear myself away from the water during the last few weeks I have lain under a shady tree in my garden and watched my sun-dial—working.

Last summer I spent my leisure hours watching my rain-gauge. I did not know in those days that I owned a sun-dial. Now I almost know it off by heart, as the sun blazes permanently down on four-fifths of its motto :

“ Let others tell of storm and showers ;
I only count your sunny hours.”

Happy, it says, is man in that he forgets past miseries and only remembers the days of joy. Yet is it not queer that we to-day can only comment adversely on to-day ? We have sung our morning hymn of hate at the heat for the last two weeks with splendid regularity ; we have talked of the merciless sun and unfailingly attributed our slackness to the weather—but would we, I wonder, have really preferred a wet Derby, a wet Ascot and a wet Lord's ? Does not the sun make our women-folk prettier, our feeding daintier, our drinking a delight, our leisure hours more precious, and our nights (if we have the sense to sleep out of doors) a thing of beauty and a joy ?

Let us cease, therefore, from grumbling at the glory of the sun, and let us enter this green glade and gaze again out of the shadows on my sun-dial in the rose-garden beyond. There lies no sermon in a watch : a watch, as Charles Lamb said, is a dead thing . . . compared with the simple altar-like structure and silent heart-language of the old dial. To squander time wantonly by watching the shadow record its passage is to enjoy a golden and a heart-free holiday ; to have recourse to a clock is to be reminded of work, engagements and the civilised world ; to rely on one's sun-dial is to cease from splitting hairs about minutes and to be roughly right to an hour or two—to abolish time at sundown as the ancients did.

But the sun-dial's crowning glory is that it is the true lovers' timepiece. Who will ever forget the sun-dial in Kenneth Grahame's inimitable story, *Tyme Tryeth Trothe* ? Lovers pledge their vows over the sun-dial regardless of the passage of the sun—they part, difficulties crowd upon them, and one of the two comes out into the garden to recapture that first careless rapture—and then yet a little while and the pair are reunited. “Tyme Tryeth Trothe.”

Marcus Stone, too, knew his job when he painted in the dial to accentuate romance: “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” What lovers ever dared to quarrel in the presence of the great witness of quickly flitting Eternity ? The sun-dial teaches us to spend the good hours extravagantly ; it cannot understand this carping attitude of the aggrieved rain-makers. When the rain comes the sun-dial ceases work—and we can return to our rain-gauges if we will.

But will the modern lovers plight their troths over
a jam-pot of muddy water? Could the rain-gauge
ever be a trysting-place?

I far prefer to believe—

“*Horas non numero nisi serenas.*”

XXXIX

WINTER SPORTS

I THOUGHT before I came out here that I had been told all there was to be known about winter sports. In point of fact, it was all completely wrong.

I had been told much of the dangers of ski-ing, which are practically non-existent ; nothing of the dangers of the after-dinner rush for chairs in the hotel lounge, which are considerable.

I had been told that it was only necessary to read the experts on the art of ski-ing to master the telemark and other turns.

To enjoy the thrills of ski-ing the sane man discards all artificial turns and invents his own ; otherwise he spends weeks of agony learning to lean in all sorts of impossible positions. There is no limit to the tortures which our teachers, at vast expense to our pockets, compel us to endure in order that we may qualify for a third-class test.

Descriptive writers make much of the grandeur of the scenery. After one's first half-hour one takes about as much notice of it as of one's own back garden.

I had been told much of the air. I have been here a month, and would give a good deal for an hour of Skegness.

The fascination of Switzerland lies neither in the

people we meet—most of whom are to be seen at Ascot, Goodwood, Hurlingham, Oxford and Cambridge—nor in the air, nor in the scenery, nor on the skating rink : it lies wholly in “blinding” down terrific slopes on ski, quite out of control, in blizzards and icy snow that cause one’s ears and fingers to be frost-bitten.

There is no pleasure (except golf) that we take more sadly. To listen to the technical “shop” talked nightly in the hotel bar you would think that we were all taking an honours course for a degree which meant life or death to us.

I had been told that Switzerland was famous for amorous adventures and will-o’-the-wisp flirtations. It is certainly not so here. The most fascinating frocks, the most bewitching smiles, the prettiest faces all fail to divert the strenuous male from his stern purpose. He comes out here to pass his third-class test . . . and with that end in view he sits up half the night working out diagrams ; he creeps out stealthily at dawn to the practice slopes, he spends the whole day in falling and twisting his limbs into weird postures, he goes to bed early to keep fit.

Little wonder that no one ever tells the truth about Switzerland. I expect that when we get home we shall all feel a little ashamed of having worked so hard to master so simple an art—and in reply to your query we shall laconically say : “Oh yes ; the ski-ing was quite good, and—I met the Brownrigg-Lopwings,” and then, perhaps, we shall laugh.

You will not know that it is our first laugh for a month.

Swiss life is not gay, but it is good. It is, for my sort of person, the best holiday imaginable. But you

must remember that by "my sort of person" I mean one of Cromwell's Ironsides, always in training for battle.

To-morrow I fight the telemark again. I must go to bed early. Good-night.

XL

THE NEW SQUIRE

DARTINGTON HALL, which has been the seat of the Champernownes since Domesday, has passed out of the possession of that family. This is only one instance out of hundreds that might be cited where the New Poor, owing to no possible fault of their own, find themselves uprooted from the spot that they have made their own.

The modern girl grouses because she dare not try the venture of marriage on £500 a year ; the modern worker strikes for more and more pay ; business men all complain that they cannot make both ends meet, which means that they are not getting the £20,000 a year that they expected—the old squirearchy alone suffer in silence. Theirs is the most poignant of tragedies.

It is small consolation to them to think that the old order needs must change, yielding place to new. What worries them is the feeling that they are part and parcel of the ground they occupy ; it is their influence that has kept the face of Nature fair. No money would tempt them to exploit their own soil for building purposes, or to dig for coal below their meadows. They were called the idle rich ; they were not rich, but they wisely loved comfort ; they were not idle ; they devoted themselves to the welfare of those dependent on them. From them sprang a race of great generals and admirals, statesmen and benefactors, men who were born leaders,

who gave to England her high position in the world ; they had much leisure, and they used that leisure wisely in the service of the State.

The new squire has the money, but he has to make his own traditions. As money has come to him quickly, he may assume that tact, courtesy, powers of leadership, a sense of social service and the other concomitants of the gentleman are easy to acquire. He may even be deluded into believing that money is all. Whatever his attitude, his responsibility is great.

The future of England depends to a large extent on the families who own her country houses. They are bound to lead, because they have the leisure to lead. The whole point is, whither ? Up or down ? As yet we cannot say. All we know is that the days of the old squirearchy are over, and at present no perceptible advantage seems to have been gained by their abolition except a certain satisfaction on the part of the disgruntled who envied them.

The hall and the manor-house, the castle and the priory will be occupied again before long. We can only hope that the new owners will not attempt to impress their value by ostentatious vulgarity, but that each new squire will make it his life-work or especial hobby to solve the problem of living for those who dwell under his influence. Nothing could be more baleful than that we should all be nomads in Suburbia. Each of us has a county that calls, a village whose name conjures up precious memories.

XLI

THE FALLACY OF ST SWITHIN

MANY devout believers in weather lore and maxims will be congratulating themselves this morning and annoying their neighbours with sagacious nods of the head. There is no sentence so irritating to one's ears as the oft-repeated "I told you so." Let it rain on St Swithin's Day never so frenziedly, I still repudiate the saint's influence over the clouds.

Other nations prefer other saints and other days for auguries of rain. France has St Médard (8th June), Germany the day of the Seven Sleepers (27th June), and Belgium St Godelieve (27th July). In other words, foul weather is to be expected in Western Europe from the first week in June to the first week in September ! Talk about pessimism !

In these days of meteorological scientific research these old wives' tales may well go by the board. The epithet of "fill-dyke" applied to February is grotesquely out of place, for February is one of our driest months. Not many of us have ever seen March coming in like a lion ; still fewer have seen her going out like a lamb.

It is pathetic to think of the numbers of people who continue, in the face of innumerable instances of its falsity, to believe that a red sky at night is the shepherd's delight, and that a red sky in the morning is the shepherd's warning.

We pride ourselves on being a level-headed race, and yet we are all at the mercy of the most outrageous superstitions. We always defer to the opinion of any sufficiently picturesque rustic when on holiday. We listen with rapt attention to his Nestor-like predictions about the coming day, and go on our way comforted or depressed accordingly.

It rarely strikes us that the weather forecast in the newspaper is far more reliable than the farmer. But there is something cold-blooded and unsavoury about isobars on a map. Anti-cyclone is a horrid word. It is much more pleasant to say : " I've got a headache ; it is sure to thunder." " My joints are cracking ; it will rain before sundown." " The cows are lying down (or standing up) ; mark my words, you will never get home dry (or it won't rain to-day)." We earn an easily won reputation as weather-wise when we attribute changes in the moon ; we should find it harder to prove quite how the moon withholds or supplies rain.

It is true that if it rains before seven it is frequently fine before eleven, so, having found one nursery rhyme with a grain of truth in it, we swallow them all ; but, if you want to win money on an easy bet, take on those people who place implicit faith in the exploded fallacy :

" If St Swithin greets, the proverb says,
The weather will be foul for forty days."

My only wonder is that some weather-maxim crank has not come forward to prove that it has not rained for months because the day on which Charles I. was executed happened to be fine. Surely the drought has a patron saint. But he is probably in hiding.

XLII

A PLEASANT WHITSUN !

WE were basking in deck-chairs on the beach at Brighton. (Why ? Because we live there.)

“Listen to this,” I said. “This is the place for us.”

“Read on,” murmured Olwen. “I shall probably go to sleep.”

“There are fields purple with meadow sage,” I began, “yellow with the glorious globe-flower, pink with sainfoin or blue with campanulas. There are slopes of nodding columbines and banks covered with small gentian. Anemones of all tints, the rock-rose, the pansy, the wild strawberry——”

A strident voice hissed in my ears : “Like a naice photograph ter-dye, sir ? Jest as y’are, the lidy and the gent, a naice tasty group ? ”

With mingled pity and wrath I dismissed the sweating camera man and with satisfaction watched him plough his heavy way over the hot pebbles to wake a dyspeptic Anglo-Indian. Lazily I listened to heated words warming the already oppressive atmosphere. My mind wandered to flower-bedecked meadows and green forests fringing a lake of deepest blue.

“Where is this Elysium ? ” cooed Olwen.

“Evian, in the Savoy,” I answered.

“We could never get there and back in the time,” she sighed.

A gigantic shadow hovered over me. I heard the punching of tickets.

"Ludgate Circus; two," I snarled.

"It's the man about the chairs, silly," nudged my wife.

"Tell him to call again on Thursday; I'm out," I whispered.

"Twopence each, if you please," yelled a raucous voice at my elbow.

I looked up to see the moustache of Harry Tate and the eyebrows of George Robey. I gave him back his chair and lay on the hard stones at Olwen's feet.

"You won't find that very comfortable, dear," said Olwen.

I didn't. I put my coat under my head and went back to Evian.

"I rather think you've got some tar on your new shirt," came a voice through the darkness. I slept on.

I woke to put a hand up to my cheek. I had been stung. No, there was blood. Olwen was speaking sharply to a fat woman.

"Your little boy has killed my husband. He was quite a good one. It is a pity. There are plenty of worse ones at whom he might throw stones. Take him into the water and drown him."

"Thank you, darling," I murmured gratefully.

"We haven't settled yet where we are going for Whitsun," she said apologetically.

A baby was being bitten by a dog within a yard of me, a Salvation Army band on my right was making its brazen triumph heard on high, on my left a wizened greengrocer was reclaiming a score of sinners from the

fires of hell, couples everywhere were kissing loudly, in the water girls were screaming at the approach of waves.

"Somewhere quiet," I thundered. "Can you hear me?"

"Just," she megaphoned. "What about the river?"

"Poisoned by radish-tops in a river-side hotel, and then arrested by the Thames Conservancy for holding your hand? Not much. Let's go abroad."

"The smells of Nice, the smells of Nice,
Where germs abound and natives fleece,"

she misquoted.

"There is an English chorus to that," I sang back.

"It goes to any good psalm tune. Listen to my chant."

I chanted: it was a Gregorian tune, and quickly collected a crowd.

"The Downs are infested with adders," I sang, "and the Weald with bulls; hornets lurk in every hedgerow, and the highways are thick with the dust of a million motors; it looks as if we'd better stay indoors."

"Shall I go round with the hat now?" yelled Olwen hoarsely.

"I want to bathe at dawn in the Evenlode or the Windrush, while the dew is on the lush grass," I continued to an ever-increasing congregation.

"Why 'lush'?" shouted a purist.

"Grass is always lush when the dew is on it," I retaliated quickly.

"Oh! you mean 'slush,'" bellowed the interrupter. I sang on.

"I want to breakfast on grape-fruit and coffee, honey and Devonshire cream under a weeping-willow; I want

to lie in a hammock in an orchard and be lulled to sleep by birds and the hum of the hay-cutter ; I want to wake to a world full of scent and colour, of lilac and laburnum, cherry blossom and honeysuckle, laughing children and buzzing bees. I want to 'fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world,' listening to the nightingale in the evening on a lawn sweet with the smell of night-scented stock——"

"Well, you can't do that in Brighton ; we'd better get hold of a time-table," said Olwen. "Let's go home before the police arrive."

The multitude took us to our doors, and we left them to gape at our windows while we wrangled over maps and a Bradshaw. Finally Olwen decided on Cambridge and a trunk. "It's May Week," she said, "and there's always Grantchester."

I decided on Burford and a rucksack. "I hate crowds," I said.

"They're still there," said Olwen, coyly waving to the masses below.

When the day came we compromised on a suit-case and no destination. We walked to the station ; there were no taxis. The entrance was like a beehive. We joined several queues. All the world was coming to Brighton ; all Brighton was trying to see the world. In the end Brighton lost and we were swept back down towards the sea.

"We shall have to pretend that we've just arrived," said Olwen. "After all, the air here is very good."

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This morning, if you are on the beach at Brighton, you may catch sight of a man (you will recognise him by the plaster on his cheek) sitting in a deck-chair reading

aloud to his wife about the delights of the Savoy (not the hotel); hovering near him will be sellers of chocolates, photographers, ticket-punchers, stone-throwers, brass bands and preachers, but there will be no adders, no bulls, no dust, no hornets, no wasps and no earwigs.

After all, you can't have everything—except at Evian.

XLIII

ON A COLD AND FROSTY MORNING

NOW all the youth of England are on fire and a silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies; instead, they don the sweater, knickers, boots and forthwith search for skates.

Now do the harassed mothers, nurses, maids scour the house from basement to attic, musing the while in some such phrase as this: "Drat those children: sakes alive, where did we put those skates?"

Now does father take up the whole of the fire with his body and the morning paper, and irritate grannie by recounting in a loud voice a list of dates on which the frost was even more severe.

Now does grannie querulously retort: "Will you be good enough, Robert, to let me see a little of the fire and to read the news for myself when you have gone?"

Now can be heard the excited voices in the nursery: "Those are my skates, Isabel. Please, mother, Isabel's taken my skates." "They aren't his skates, mother. You are a dirty little sneak, Geoffrey. I'll pay you out for this." "Oh! the straps of these are all broken. Whatever shall I do? Boo-hoo, boo-hoo!"

Now do the ironmongers, cycle agents and general store managers rub their hands pleasantly as they place in conspicuous places in their windows hundreds of age-old skates freshly polished in the night by long-suffering apprentices.

Now do the miserly and the faint of heart stand with their noses glued to the shop window and pray for a hasty thaw.

Now do the rich and the improvident hurry in and expend good paper "Bradburys" for wondrous patents which will never work.

Now does the schoolboy, rubicund of hue, muffler round his neck, creep unwillingly to school, eyeing each pond with wistful gaze, as if he were stout Cortez, silent on a peak in Darien, longing for the hour of twelve and freedom, when he may join the revellers on the ice.

Now strikes the midday hour, and anon the multitude of workers, released from toil, endanger their limbs on the hazardous waters: now "swanking" experts, late of Château d'Œx, and other refuges of winter sports, scowl angrily at the hempen homespuns who come swaggering, arms akimbo, bumping heavily, with delighted screams, on the very patches of ice which they have delicately carved into intricate and difficult figures.

Now winsome flappers trip daintily over the feet of their subaltern partners in the dreamy waltz, clinging hysterically as their feet seem to slip from under them.

Now the ever-polite lady-killer officiously seeks to fasten skates on to the boots of his Venus of the moment, to the no little indignation of the money-grubbing touts who see in him a purloiner of their pockets, depriving them of their just due.

Now the village curate rises in the estimation of his choir-boys, for is not he fleeter of foot and more skilful at ice-hockey than any of his congregation?

Now do old gentlemen and ladies forgather on the brink of the lake ostensibly chaperoning their grand-

children, in reality shivering in the chilly blasts of the east wind and complaining of the wintry conditions.

Now do meteorological experts, on the one hand, declaim loudly and confidently that the skating prospects are excellent, and, on the other, that the wind is already veering round to the west and to-morrow will see the end of skating.

Now do those luckless mortals who possess no skates hurry to the carpenter's shop and busy themselves in making toboggans against the coming snow.

Now in the exhilaration of the sport do the revellers forget the calls of lunch or tea, but spin round and round for mile after mile, lost in the joy of rushing through space.

Now do the neophytes begin to complain of well-nigh intolerable anguish in the ankles and wish that it were not so far to fall, nor the ice so hard and resilient.

Now do the schoolboys, casting discretion to the winds, make a bee-line for the post marked "Danger"; now, alack! does the ice give one forbidding, ominous crack, and forthwith Tommy Watts vanishes from sight. Now does the heroic curate hasten, withal warily, to the rescue, and amid the plaudits of frightened flappers brings young Thomas to the surface and restores him, wet and frightened, to his white-faced companions. Now do local journalists hastily look up their dictionary of synonyms for suitable epithets to bestow on the reverend gentleman for his splendid conduct.

Now sweeps the vicar graciously forward and in a few well-chosen words extols "my colleague's coolness and fortitude," mentions in pompous tones that he proposes to acquaint the Royal Humane Society, of which (the bystanders gather) he is a managing director, concern-

ing the matter, and in due course, at suitable time and place, a medal will be forthcoming to commemorate this unforgettable, noble act of self-sacrifice.

Now may Mrs Watts be seen bestowing a severe chastening upon her luckless offspring for spoiling his "only decent suit."

Now the sky becomes overcast and flakes of snow begin to fall, faster and ever faster.

Now do the hearts of the possessors of sledges begin to beat more rapidly and pleasure to oust the gloom they have hitherto worn upon their faces.

Now do people begin to leave the water-side and the valleys for the sides of hills to select the most hazardous descents for their "Cresta-runs."

Now do children prepare the treacherous slides on the main pathways, to the discomfort of the unwary, and policemen are implored by outraged citizens to lock up every boy and girl under the age of sixteen for ever and ever.

Now the shades of evening begin to fall and father returns from his office and shouts for hot drinks and a hot bath in order to avoid double pneumonia.

Now old cronies draw their chairs closer up to the fire, and moan that another day like this will kill them.

Now healthy, robust schoolboys come boisterously home and ecstatically interchange their opinions: "*Some* day, this!" "Oh! for another such really perfect day."

XLIV

“NO MANNER OF WORK”

JUST as certain Christian names call up different associations in the minds of different people (what, for instance, does Caroline, Chloe, Iris or Charles connote to you ?), and just as certain scents revive memories that are pleasant to one and tragic to another, so do we all think of something peculiar to ourselves when we hear any day of the week mentioned.

Most people rather dislike Monday : to me it is a good day : I have no lecture to deliver at night ; I can afford to dine at my ease and indulge in a game of billiards or bridge afterwards. Tuesday I associate with beagling ; Wednesday with writing ; Thursday scarcely exists as a day at all. I am hard at work from breakfast till bed-time. On Friday I travel, and on Saturday I manage occasionally to get time for a game of football or cricket. But the day that stands apart from the rest is Sunday.

Every Saturday night I arrange my desk and go through my papers, making a list of all the things I have to finish the next day. When Sunday morning comes I am called an hour earlier than any other day of the week. After a hurried breakfast I give myself an hour to look through half-a-dozen Sunday newspapers—during the week I get no chance to do more than open the newspaper at the middle page, but on Sunday my

brain is ready to accept any reason to explain Aston Villa's defeat, or the number of divorce cases.

I then turn to weightier matters, and having been shown how to reconstruct the universe by Blatchford, Inge and others, I take up my own pen, and tear up any bills that may have come in during the week. At this period I usually have callers, but as they see me immersed in a sea of papers, they usually borrow a book (which they will forget to return) and go away.

I then go through my letters with the idea of answering them—I write letters on Sundays only. Having decided that thirty of them can wait, as they have waited for several weeks already, I choose the least important of them and explain at very great length why I have no time to write. I then begin to collect material for an article or a lecture, and the door opens and I am requested to clear the table, as it is lunch-time.

Sunday lunch is a function. After this heavy meal is over I begin to think of work, when I am told that the dog needs exercise, that I am an “unsociable devil,” that I must “come out at once,” and I find myself walking slowly along a tarred pavement, hating my fellow-man. Why do the citizens of suburbs and country towns dress and talk every Sabbath day as if they were serving on a jury? These sticks, these bowler hats, these sombre clothes, these solemn faces, they make me despair of ever recovering my sense of gaiety, of warmth, of colour, and an irresponsible joy again.

Sunday afternoon out of doors always makes me want to cry. There are always crowds of children with prizes and Prayer Books, coming out of, or going into, Sunday school; there are always groups of idlers,

discordant in their clash of colour, raucous and rude of voice, leering at girls whose lack of charm is not so pronounced on Monday or Thursday, but has time on Sunday to penetrate through to your inmost senses and make you shudder.

Sullen and dispirited you return home ; only the dog is uninfluenced by the day. Once more you put out your books on the table. The bell rings. The hall is a succession of pattering footsteps.

You are called into the drawing-room for tea, and people hope that they are not interrupting you. Brave men speak the truth. I am not brave. I sit on a music-stool and twirl round and round on it until someone plays or sings, or puts on the gramophone. Tea callers usually stay to dinner. At about ten-thirty I again put my books out on the table and begin to collect data for my article.

At ten-thirty-five a voice summons me to bed. I obey. A busy day, Sunday. On my desk lies a list of the things that I had to get through during the day. They will have to wait till next week.

Those to whom I owe letters, please accept this, the only intimation.

XLV

CRICKET ON THE GREEN

ARE you one of those countless enthusiasts of cricket who, finding your standard below the level of good club cricket, sink to the level of spectator? That is the wrong step to take.

Give village cricket a chance, and live to thank me for the hint.

You know in your heart of hearts that you have never enjoyed any game so much as that which you used to play in the garden when it was "six and out" if the ball went into the churchyard or the rose-garden, and "four and mend it" if you smashed the study window.

Don't watch other people, however good. Play yourself, however bad you are.

The worse you are the more you will enjoy it. There are few ecstasies in life to compare with that of the batsman whose batting average hovers between 1.3 and 2.7 when he rushes down the pitch, bat over his shoulder, and "lams" the blacksmith for six into the adjoining cornfield.

You may think it dull and easy to field on grass as smooth as a billiard-table, but it requires real courage to dive into shell-holes, jump over railings, plough through poppies and long grass in your anxiety to reach that high-soaring catch before it falls.

There is endless variety in village cricket. You don't

have to sit in the pavilion and watch the slow compilation of centuries. If a side gets thirty runs all told it will probably win.

Village cricket will put you in your place ; the element of chance looms so large that you will quickly cease to take your batting or bowling seriously.

Village cricket means that you will lose your contempt for the vicar, and no longer regard the postmaster as a dangerous revolutionary : it is a levelling game.

With all your accoutrements of " I.Z. " cap, M.C.C. blazer, perfectly creased flannels, well-fitting gloves and immaculate pads, you are just as likely to fail to score as the ploughboy who goes in clad in khaki shirt, corduroys, one pad (on the wrong leg), no gloves, using his bat as a scythe.

But you need never fear that you will be dropped from the team. If you are a good fellow there will always be a place for you. Your colours lend a tone to the side. . . . They sometimes even make your opponents treat you with reverence.

It is quite likely that you will never be found out. One lucky six and you will be famous. Two sixes and your opinion on any subject will be respected. Three and you will be elected M.P. for the district if you care to stand.

XLVI

EVIL FAIRIES OF CRICKET

NOT since the days of Tom Richardson, not since 1897, not for twenty-five long years have Surrey beaten Kent at Blackheath. On the first day they couldn't hold catches, on the second day they played back like panic-stricken rabbits when they should have gone out to meet the ball, and even Hobbs the mighty had to scratch like a hen before the wily ball of the "Wee Free" man, who bagged seven wickets in 43 overs at the average expense of one run per over. Cricketers must be, one thinks, as superstitious as actors or sailors to allow sinister omens to play havoc with them like this.

The whole story of luck in games is of engrossing interest. There are unimaginative people who scoff at Mademoiselle Lenglen, Patterson and Anderson for introducing a menagerie on the courts at Wimbledon. Let those who are without sin be the first to cast the stone. I, for one, live in a glass house in this respect. In old days I could not run unless I carried my mascot of the baby's slipper; I fumbled passes and could not tackle even the slowest three-quarter if I wore a certain jersey; I never made a run if I used a particular bat, and I dropped catches all over the field unless I wore a "Nondescript" scarf round my waist. "Lord! What fools these mortals be!"

Very true ; and it is as well to be honest over our follies. Is it auto-suggestion ?

How do you explain the crumpling up of eleven level-headed sportsmen year after year when they appear on a particular ground ? You can talk till you are blue in the face about the eccentricity of the Rectory field wicket, but the wicket wasn't half so eccentric as some of the Surrey batting. You can't get away from the fact that some grounds possess an eerie influence : on some a good pixy sits on your shoulders, lends wings to your feet, sureness to your hands and the gift of vision to your eyes ; on others you are haunted by a malignant sprite, a very Puck of mischief, who trips you up, paralyses your legs, sends flies into your eyes, and turns your fingers into nerveless strips of butter.

A man returns home dispirited, dejected. " I don't know what's the matter with me. I couldn't bat for toffee to-day," he says moodily. He does not realise that there is nothing the matter with him, that he just happened momentarily to come under the ban of evil fairies of sport. Think of Chapman, nearly left out of the Cambridge eleven, unable to get back in any game during term-time to his true form. His guardian elves came to his rescue in the nick of time, and now he simply can't help scoring centuries every day.

What is the reason ? Is Fenner's to him a sort of Philippi ? As soon as he left it the curse was removed. The magic film dropped from his eyes. The sleeping beauty woke—with a vengeance. Ask the Glamorgan players (Celts to a man) whether they believe in luck ! Theirs is a side not lacking the true sporting spirit, but they have had to contend against a much stronger combination than the Yorkshire bowling. It is obvious

that the Welsh gnomes disapprove of cricket. Their game is Rugby football.

The point I want to emphasise is that this thing wants looking in the face. Allow for the fact that there are occasions when the whole of your side will be rattled out for 13, your best batsmen go sick, your bowlers develop a regular fever of long hops, but do not allow yourself to be depressed over it—to-morrow rain will fall heavily to save you from ignominious defeat, and it will be the other fellow's turn to incite the luck-fiends to anger. Folly lies in denying that luck exists; worse folly lies in allowing yourself to be affected by it. Taking it all round, there is as much sun as rain.

It is mere stupidity when it is raining to suggest that the sun will never shine again. One just plugs along, and it is really miraculous how often one catches the genie napping. Don't abuse the poor devils who attempt to propitiate the unseen by sacrifice and burnt offerings; there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of even in your cricket philosophy. Keep your abuse for those who are so weak that they accept luck as predestination, and do nothing to make themselves masters of their fates.

XLVII

THESE BLESSED HOLIDAYS

THIS is the season of the year when you have to undergo the misery of travelling to overcrowded villages in the remote corners of Great Britain if you want to see the man who is at all other times to be found at his "office"—namely, the card-room of the club.

August is a holiday month in name only for all but school children.

It is the month when father spends money like water in return for the doubtful pleasure of living in a cottage without a bath, for sleeping in a feather bed which suffocates him, for eating food which disagrees with him, for indulging in inferior drinks which poison him, for bathing in the sea, which gives him a chill, for wearing clothes which make him look like the captain of a yacht in a musical comedy.

It is the month when mother has the responsibility of looking after five children instead of one in a place where accidents occur hourly instead of weekly, when housekeeping becomes a grim spectre, owing to holiday prices and grossly inadequate shops.

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That's shaken you, hasn't it? You are beginning to feel that you are sorry you ever left the peace of your own home. You wish that you were as wise as I am, and had not endured the discomforts of a changed life.

You are wrong. It is this jolting of yourself out of the old, comfortable routine which does you good.

If there were no holidays you would be content to go on till you died, placidly trapesing up to town daily with your carefully rolled umbrella, immaculate bowler and polished attaché case, sure that the cogs of England would not revolve if you dropped out.

Holidays are not meant to be comfortable. They are meant to give your self-complacency a series of severe blows. At home you are somebody. The grocer knows you. In Cornwall no one cares a tinker's curse who you are, unless you live in a caravan and wear green trousers.

Holidays mean the reawakening of romance. You have to win your wife's love all over again. For a year she has seen you in an unromantic setting. You have passed muster because she has had no time to think, but on holiday she *has* time to think. You are in a romantic setting; like Cleopatra, she has immortal longings—can you satisfy them?

If you have any doubt whatever on the matter, do not risk it. Send your wife (with the children if she wants them) to Scotland while you go (with the children if she does not want them) to Devonshire.

In the romantic settings there each of you will pine for the other, which is again all to the good.

No. There is only one thing against holidays. Avoid large towns unless you live in the country. The essence of a holiday is change. Change every single habit you possess and your holiday will do you good.

But get rid of this idea that a holiday should be comfortable.

XLVIII

GROUSE SHOOTING BEGINS

YOU may perchance live on a suburban line which takes you, morning after morning, evening after evening, to Euston, St Pancras or King's Cross. You are not to be envied to-day.

We southrons who leave for home from the south side of the river will not have those acute reminders, those gun-cases, those Harris tweeds, that heather mixture, those trunks labelled Kingussie, Aviemore, Pitlochry, Aberfeldy . . . names that bring golden memories back so acutely to the mind. . . .

It is all right if one is going up oneself in a week or two: it is all wrong if, as seems probable in my case, Scotland is to be merely the name of a distant country and not one vast grouse moor. . . .

I want to go to the moors above Loch Laggan, the slopes of Schiehallion.

I want to sit and listen to the grouse bragging in the coverts—"ggg-back—ggg-back." I want to go to bed early and to hear someone say: "Half-past seven sharp we leave. Boots all sound for the wet, eh? Cartridges? Oh, two or three hundred."

I want to watch the beaters away in the distance, get my slip for the number of my butt for the first drive. I want to see, or fancy that I see, those little black specks moving away, at first slowly, then fast, then arrow-like—then to hear the pop-pop-popping all round

me . . . the yells of excited flankers ; to bring down my first from ninety feet, and to hear it fall with a thud at my feet.

I want to sense that indescribable feeling that comes over a man when ten brace of grouse whiz by when one is totally unprepared, to see a hurricane of grouse whirl over me while I fire, and pant, and reload, and fire, and miss, and pant again. I want to swear as I see the flags appearing, warning me of the drivers' approach long before I am ready.

I want to inspect the hundred brace of brown-grey victims lying as witness to the good marksmanship of other men—a direct incentive to myself. I want suddenly to find myself, to get into my stride, my second wind, to “bang, bang, bang” away, and find no runners as the results of my shots.

I want to hear the insistent cry coming down the wind all the day, as joyous as the “hark-forrard” of hunting—“Ho'd 'em up—ho'd 'em up—ho'd 'em up!” I want to be out day after day from seven till half-past five, a snack of sandwiches for lunch, a nip at the brandy flask for tea, guns to clean, clothes to dry—all the dirty work you like—miles and miles and miles to tramp for just those seconds of excitement.

I want to be away from all this. How can you expect me to sit quiet in the rattling, stuffy, suburban train and listen to Hughson saying over and over again: “A queer thing happened to me to-day while I was getting on the bus at London Bridge”?

You can keep your London Bridge. It is the Twelfth of August! Oh, glorious Twelfth!

XLIX

CROSS-COUNTRY RUNNING

FOR some reason, entirely illogical I am convinced, the partisans of this particular branch of athletics have ever been on the defensive. It is a curious fact that the enlightened Athenians should so extol one maiden because she ran so well, worship another because of her swiftness combined with her chastity, and hold up for eternal panegyric "the noble strong man, who could race like a God, bear the face of a God, whom a God loved so well," while the ultra-moderns who pride themselves on nothing so much as their prowess in games should yet hold aloof and gaze with disdain at this oldest and purest of sports.

I sometimes gravely doubt whether it is not due to that innate snobbishness that is so characteristic of most of us.

We cannot bear to be seen taking part in a sport which is not held in universal esteem. No man would dream of being other than *persona grata* in the sporting world if he were a "Rugger Blue," whereas I have met many men who have looked on a "Running Blue" as a type that ought never to be allowed to wear the dark or light blue scarf.

At school it is much the same. Keeness in sports is a sign of a distorted mind: running seriously and training with that object count among the things "that are not done." The cricket and "footer bloods" are

looked up to with awe and admiration ; they are ever in the public eye ; but the sports champion is met with : “ We’ve no use for that sort of man ; anybody who takes the sweat could run off with the sports pot.”

Such is fashion, convention, tradition ; the bane of all progress, the enemy of true sporting instincts.

It may be urged that I have overstated my case, exaggerated the contempt, underestimated the general favourable impression made by the runner. If I have, I am very glad ; but the very fact that I know of cases bearing out my remarks does not outweigh even the brilliant exception of Rugby, where cross-country running is made the predominant feature of the Lent term, school colours being awarded to the VIII., and races arranged against the universities and leading London clubs. Would that all other Public Schools of standing would follow so grand an example. The outlook is certainly at last hopeful, because of the action of Oxford and Cambridge.

In 1905 the Blues Committee recognised that a man who ran first for his university over seven and a half miles of stiff country was at least as worthy of a “ Full Blue ” as a man that ran one or three miles on a track, and consequently awarded four “ Half-Blues ” and a “ Full Blue ” each year to the Hare and Hounds’ Club. The O.U.A.C. followed suit at once by asking the O.U.H. and H. to use the Iffley Ground pavilion and to amalgamate with them, so that now the president of the O.U.A.C. is ex-officio president of the Hare and Hounds as well. These actions brought cross-country running into the prominence and beneficial state it so fully deserved, and year by year the standard of running improves, and more is done to give the runner a chance

to justify himself. Oxford used yearly to enter a team for the Southern Counties Championship, and has done most creditable performances against some of the finest clubs of the day.

But it is not so much of the "Blue" or the championship runner that I wish to write; my object rather is to plead for the fuller recognition of this sport among the ordinary sport-loving men and girls who abound so freely, and yet because of their lack of "eye" or "trickiness of foot" have been unable to take part in cricket, football or hockey matches, and so are compelled to watch when they would much rather be up and doing.

For people born in a county such as Devon, wholly given over to hunting, there is no excuse for those who say that they want to get exercise but never have the chance.

One run with a pack of beagles soon separates the really keen from the pseudo sportsman.

In such a place as Oxford, where there is every opportunity to "slack" if a man wants to (and heaven forbid that we should ever prevent a man from following his own inclination), we are for ever coming across men who take no exercise on the ground that there is no room for them on their "footer" or hockey side; they "don't care for golf; what else is there to do?"

Well, in the first place, there are the Exeter beagles, open to all the varsity. I can conceive of no way of spending the day better than by driving away in the company of some forty or fifty other keen men right into the heart of the country in the fall of the year or the early spring, and following the sixteen or eighteen couples of sturdy little beagles in full cry over stiff

plough and springy turf, over thorn hedges and wide brooks, at a speed that "spread-eagles" the field quickly and invites competition, with an eye ever upon the crafty wiles of the hunted hare. An afternoon spent in this way calls forth such ecstasies in the bath after, and such a general glow and thrill of satisfaction in the evening as are rarely to be experienced in any other way. We hear a great deal about a return to Nature and communion with her in solitude on the lonely moors, but rarely does she give so much of her best as she does to the bedraggled, worn-out, wet and weary beagler as he trudges back to tea and the drag after a heavy ten or fifteen miles' run.

But it is possible to do all this in the vac. as well, and many men feel that they would like to try to run with less clothing than the heavy beagling dress and race over plough and grass instead of plodding steadily on with constant check, so they join the Hare and Hounds Club, which is open to every member of the varsity: the subscription is small and the sport is good. Paper-chases and matches are held all through the Christmas and Lent terms, and there is every chance of a keen man to become a really fine runner, for running is not altogether a matter of luck as so many sports are: it does not depend initially on quickness of eye: it requires that a man should be physically fit, not given to perpetual cigarette smoking or drinking excessively—and nothing else. The rest comes by training. It would probably astonish the generality of mankind if they were to learn (what is really the case in most of the instances I know of famous runners) that accident alone discovered such-and-such a record-breaker; every year the varsity sports produce a sterling runner who a few

months before either didn't know he could run at all, or else was fair or mediocre at an entirely different sport.

That is one of my strongest claims that everyone should take up running. When I hear a man now saying, "Oh ! I can't run ; it's no earthly use my trying : I never have and I know it's no use," it makes me feel really vicious : so many of the greater things in life are thrown away through lack of initiative and effort : it seems silly to throw away good sportsmen for less than no reason. Only one thing is needful : this is serious and continued training. I have in my mind one splendid instance of this sort of thing. A house at school possessing no absolutely brilliant runners, no "certainties" for the sports, owing to the energy of the captain, started early in the Lent term to train for the sports : everyone in the House had to come out and practise everything : men were "weeded out" gradually, and each one was assigned his particular race and trained with the one idea of doing himself justice in that one event : the sports days arrived, and to the astonishment of nearly everyone this House began to pile up points for the House Cup : the "certainties," it is true, won their events, but they found themselves hustled and hustled along, much to their discomfort, and all "seconds" and "thirds" seemed to be filled up with members of the House that had trained so peculiarly. Then came the field events, and there was no more doubt as to the issue. However good a man is, he cannot suddenly emerge and compete with a man who has been assiduously, daily practising one event, learning all the possible advantages and taking them on the day itself.

At the risk of being tedious I have had to draw this moral. It is impossible to over-emphasise it.

Training does matter, and very much.

We hear of men falling about in dead faints after races, developing weak hearts, ruining their constitutions: I should like to inquire into the general state of fitness before they started the race in which these fatalities occurred.

To keep in condition few things are necessary, but they are very necessary. To be up by 7 A.M., to take a walk before breakfast, and to be in bed by 10 P.M. is a very sound rule; to walk long distances, on Sundays particularly (by no means a self-denying ordinance); to drink and smoke little or nothing and never cigarettes; not to worry about food, but to continue to eat normal meals in a normal way; to run varying distances constantly at varying speeds; to use a skipping-rope, and to massage frequently, sum up all the rules of training.

And the good of it all? There are always people nowadays who require precisely in concrete terms the amount of good they are going to derive from every novelty they try. In this case it is easy to answer them.

At school the good is that whereas you may have been unable to help your house on to victory in any single game, you "found yourself" as a runner, and now count among the "famous men who have fought and done"; at the varsity your college had at least the comfort that you were a sportsman of no mean order, and that you were in reality an acquisition—and now that you are "down," what now?

Are there no clubs to join? It is much to be doubted whether a more sporting crowd of men are to be met

with anywhere than are to be seen at (shall we say ?) Roehampton at the Thames Hare and Hounds Club on a Saturday afternoon : lovers of a pure sport taking their pleasures happily up to a surprising age. And this leads me to my last claim.

Is there any sport that a man may take part in till the age of fifty or sixty, except cross-country running, and rejoice to find himself fit and able ? Beyond golf, is there ?

To inculcate stamina, grit, " guts," those powers of endurance on which we pride ourselves beyond all nations of the earth, is there any training so valuable as this ? Is golf ?

In an age when we are for ever endeavouring to find some game that will keep us fit in the minimum of time, it is something to be able to have got (as a man gets by running) all the necessary exercise for the day or week in two, at the most three, half-hours. No specially prepared ground or initial expenditure of vast sums is essential for this sport. Three or four men form a club of their own if there is not a well-known one already in their district (and few indeed are the districts without harriers), and without any appeal for public funds or spoiling of a private purse they inaugurate what in nearly all cases turns out to be in a few years a flourishing harriers' club.

It is much to be doubted whether on the social side any game does so much good as running.

If you are really keen on social reform, and believe in personal service, join one of the innumerable harriers' clubs that exist in and around London, such as the Oxford House Club. Do you want to know something of the real conditions under which the miners work, or

understand something of the outlook on life of the artisan? Join one of the myriad Midland Counties or Northern clubs: you will be surprised.

True, the "pot-hunter" is to be found here as well as at the varsity, but he is treated with more open contempt, though he has far more excuse for his existence than his more wealthy fellow-runner.

But after running for a little with one of these clubs one quickly drops any old threadbare prejudices. It is still thought, and quite rightly, that one of the finest assets of a Public School training is the House spirit, the sense of cohesion and unanimous support of your House against the world. A man's school is his pride, openly flaunted on all occasions, but his House is something sacred, not to be talked of, but for ever remembered and fought for. This has long been thought to be a peculiar tenet of the Public School man: it is not so. It occurs just as much, though in an entirely different way, with those splendid sportsmen of heterogeneous trades and professions who band together under one common club banner and race in many championships and club matches that occur so frequently in all parts of England.

Unselfishness in sport is not peculiar to the Public Schools and varsities.

This is but one example: by personal contact alone can one see eye to eye with the various types that form the majority of the people, and in every case it is worth while. For staunch friendship, pure sporting instincts, kindness unqualified, generosity of the noblest kind, for the fine qualities that go to make the "parfit gentil knight," commend me to the men I have met in curious, unheard-of places, quarrymen with just their Saturday

afternoons off to give themselves to their district harriers.

It is not that there is no temptation to run crooked : many men I have known who have been approached by some of the lower blackguards that frequent country race meetings and been offered a "fiver" or a ten-pound note to run second or third when they had every chance of winning outright.

Cross-country clubs of no mean repute have offered promising athletes of other less fortunate clubs jobs within their own district with splendid pay if only they would run with the more famous harriers and throw up their struggling home team.

And, lastly, you may talk of the popularity of professional soccer ; it is nothing to the popularity in big towns of a famous harriers' club. Think for one moment of the membership of the one compared with the other ; contrast the fifty thousand watching twenty-two with the twenty-two watching the five hundred. Which is more likely to be conducive to a general state of national fitness : a sport in which all take part, so that there is no room for a gallery except for the twenty odd veterans who eye the young athletes with longing sympathy and thrills of admiration and reminiscence, or a sport in which thousands of idling, drinking, smoking, undergrown, callow youths stand on a filthy wet afternoon, spending their only bit of free daylight in the week in searching for causes of foulness in an opponent's play and brawling with all unbiassed spectators ?

It is one of the chief charms and most noble qualities of running that it demands no heavily paid secretaries, no extraordinary auditing of accounts, no hysterical

advertising for thousands of spectators ; it demands only the keen, the fit, the able, those who are only too anxious to do something themselves, leaving watching, comments and betting to others ; it is cruel in that it has no use for the weakling, but cruel only that it may produce a state of efficiency in which the weakling will at last be an obsolete type.

L

THE OLD BERKELEY

FOR the first time for thirty years I have been for a drive on a coach. Long before "The Old Berkeley" drew up at the Old Ship, Brighton, to pick up her passengers my heart was pounding with excitement, for far away I could hear the horn, the tlot-tlot-tlotting of the hoofs on the hard road . . . then the jingle-jangle of the harness, and round the corner swept into view one of the noblest sights on God's earth—a team of satin chestnuts, perfectly groomed, glistening in the sun, proudly trotting, proudly pulling-up at the light touch of the Olympian on the box, the rubicund, rotund, debonair, grey-top-hatted English driver of the old school, perfect blend of cigar, carnation, cinnamon dust-coat and cheerfulness.

The Dickensian guard, exactly like Gilbert Childs, in pink coat, rough beaver top-hat, spotted-dog "breeks" and mottled face, got down with a grin and helped (with a grin) the Lewes pilgrims to the roof of this great yellow and black "drag" with the bright vermilion wheels.

There was an actor, a lawyer, a parson—fifteen of us there were in all, any one of whom might have stepped straight out of Chaucer, pure-bred English indulging in an English mode of travel on a cloudless, golden, crisp October English day. To tool along the Hassocks road through the green-blossomed Downs,

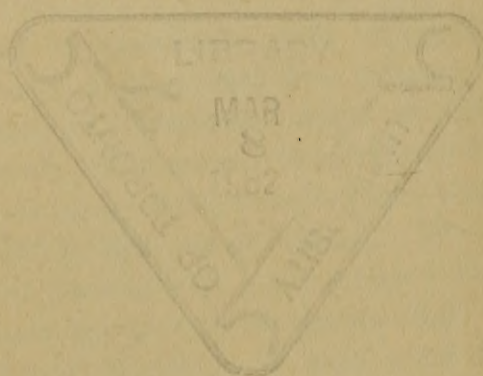
to meander through russet-leaved avenues, past Tudor manor-houses and timbered cottages, flicking off apples from overhanging trees, never at a higher speed than eight miles an hour—this it is to travel.

What perfect camaraderie between the pilgrims. The note is set by Bullock, the grinning guard, who has been on the road for forty years. He only rests from blowing the horn to tell story upon story ; our laughter becomes Gargantuan, like our thirst and our appetite. Bullock blows—eager-eyed children dart out of cottage doors, babies are held up in mummy's arms to hear the high cockalorum, the vicar and his wife dash out of the French window down the drive, dropping newspaper and pince-nez in their eagerness, the servants stop dusting to wave their dusters, cook rushes into the yard, the labourer waves his pitchfork, factory girls and typists rush to the windows and blow kisses, which Bullock graciously acknowledges with a courteous bow. "They set their clocks by me now," he says proudly. They do more than set their clocks by him. They set their clocks back by him—to a Merrie England of pageantry and colour, an England of dignity, an England of Dickensian, Rabelaisian humour, good-fellowship and beauty.

Just outside Plumpton a miracle occurred. We swept round a corner of the Downs ; at our feet lay the green and golden carpet of the Sussex weald. Suddenly out of a hidden lane right across our bows came the South Down hounds, homing after cubbing. "My God !" said the actor, gripping my arm. "England !" I looked at him, surprised : his eyes were wells of tears. The pink-coated huntsman and whips trotting past, the feathery, bobbing hounds of black and brown and

white silently padding along, the tang of sea in the sunny air, the quietness, broken only by the horn of the huntsman and the horn of the guard, the trotting of horses and the crunching of heavy wheels, all combined to work the miracle. I cannot describe what was in reality a vision. I find it hard to believe that it ever happened. We were silent : we had all seen a holy thing : we had seen England. None of us will ever be able to communicate what we saw : none of us will ever forget it.

Our team of chestnuts were changed at Hassocks for a piebald, a grey and two roans ; at Lewes for another team of chestnuts, while we entertained each other at lunch. The parson stood the drinks, the lawyer stood the coronas—from two to three-thirty we ate and drank healthily like our ancestors. We drew up at the Old Ship at four-thirty, more than a little dazed in a world where speed and vulgarity had ousted leisure, kindness and dignity. If you want to escape into a golden world for five hours be at the Old Ship any day at eleven-thirty. If you want to see England remember that she refuses to unveil her beauties if you exceed her speed limit of eight miles an hour.



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